



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDghi
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

NARRATOR: DENIS WRIGHT

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TAPE NO.: 1

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Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 10, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape no.: 1

Q. Sir Denis, I would like us to begin by asking you to give a short biography of yourself and then to begin this interview by describing your first contact with Iran.

A. Well, to go over my biography very briefly, I was born in 1911 in Kingston-on-Thames in England. And after an early youth spent in Hong Kong, I went to school, a boarding school in England and was at school until 1929 when I went up to Oxford, at <?> Edmond Hall where I read modern history. <In> 1932 I graduated with second-class honors in modern history and then had the hard job of trying to find a job.

Eventually I went -- it was a bad time economically in England then -- I eventually went into the advertising

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business on the market research side. And from that went to work with Mrs. Gallagher Ltd. (?), the big tobacco manufacturers, and in fact was employed by them when I was on holiday in Rumania in 1939, August. With war coming on, I went 'round to see the consulate at Constanza on the Black Sea and said, "I think I must get back immediately to England." He said, "No, we would like you to stay here, because if war does break out, you could be very useful."

And so it was, I stayed on in Constanza, was involved in economic warfare work in Rumania; and then went to Turkey, first to Trabzon, Trebezan as we called it, on the Black Sea, as vice-consul in charge and then to southern Turkey, Mersin, which became an important port during the war years. And immediately after the war, I had to make the choice of either returning to my industrial firm, Mrs. Gallagher, or trying for the Foreign Office, and I opted for the Foreign Office and was taken on their permanent staff.

So that gives you my background really. Under the Foreign Office after the war, I served first of all in Yugoslavia as commercial secretary at the embassy there in 1946 to the end of '48. I was there at the time of the Tito-Stalin crisis. From Yugoslavia, I went to Chicago as consul under the consul-general; my job was the dollar-export drive in the

middle west, so I had a huge bailiwick in the middle west to try and promote dollar exports -- I was there until 1951. When I came back to London and was made the head on promotion (much to my surprise, I might add) -- as the head of the Economic Relations Department in the Foreign Office, a very busy department at that time and we were still, sort of, suffering from wartime shortages and bilateral arrangements.

In the Economic Relations Department, we had one man dealing with oil problems -- we had no energy department in those days in the Foreign Office. In August 1953, when I was head of this department -- I had taken over the headship of the department in October 1951 -- so after less than two years, I was suddenly summoned by the head of the Foreign Office, Sir William Strang, as he then was, and told that Dr. Mossadegh had fallen the day before and we would be wanting, the British government would be wanting to resume diplomatic relations as soon as possible with Iran and would I be willing to go out there as charge d'affaires. And of course I said "would be very happy."

Now, you may ask, why should they have chosen me? And I think there were two reasons. One was that the Economic Relations Department was a department responsible for oil and they therefore concluded that I knew a lot about oil -- in

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fact this was not true because Peter Ramsbotham, who later succeeded me in Tehran many years later, was the oil man and he was direct to the undersecretary and cut out the head of the department because it was such a fast-moving thing and there were so many other occupations to heads of departments. I knew very little about oil.

Anyway, I think that was the main reason why I was selected to go. And secondly, it was just one of those fortuitous things -- two days before the fall of Mossadegh I had been at a meeting in which the head of our personnel department had been present and I suspect he was reminded of my existence. Anyway, I was chosen as the guinea pig to go to Iran.

Well, instead of the Iranian government or the Shah wishing to hurry into diplomatic relations, there were very long and protracted negotiations before we resumed diplomatic relations. And it was not until December 21st, 1953 that I eventually arrived in Iran. The reasons for this long, drawn-out delay -- because the British were extremely anxious to get relations started -- was that the Shah, or his ministers (I'm not aware of exactly who, but I suspect the Shah) said we must have an oil agreement first and then we have diplomatic relations.

Anthony Eden, who was Foreign Secretary, took entirely the reverse view, he said, "We must have diplomatic relations and then talk oil. We are not going to conduct secret negotiations in Switzerland or somewhere on oil through third parties. We must talk direct." And so we held out. And Eden, who knew a good bit about Iran -- he had studied Iranian and(?) history and literature at Oxford many years previously -- he took the line that the Iranians would be bound to want us back, if for no other reason than to play us off against the Americans, which was a traditional Iranian policy, as it were, to play us off against the Russians, now play us off against the Americans. And he was right.

And eventually, with the considerable help of the then American ambassador in Iran, Loy Henderson, a formula was worked out and a communique was published in London on a Saturday evening (I think it was the 5th of December, 1953) announcing the resumption of diplomatic relations and that oil negotiations would start shortly afterwards. That was done on a Saturday evening, an unusual time to do it. But we were so scared (the British government) of the Shah changing his mind after this long, drawn-out, to get him to a point where he would have a chargé d'affaires. There was no announcement of my name until the Monday afterwards, when the House of Commons were told by the Foreign Secretary that I

was going out to be charge d'affairs. And that was on the 7th of December.

Well, in the meantime, between August and December, I had been slowly accumulating a small team of people to go out, among them two or three people who had been in Iran before. Well, about, I don't know exact date, but probably about the 10th or 14th of December (some time around about then, maybe even before the 14th), the Swiss minister who was in charge of British interests in Iran was informed of who was coming out to there. He went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and said, "Look here's a team that this man Wright is coming out with this team. Some of the men have served in Iran before, I suppose there is no objection" -- because Mossadegh had decreed that nobody British who had served in Iran before should ever come back. Whether the Shah was consulted or not, but the reaction was, "No, we can't have anybody who's ever been in Iran before."

So, there was consternation in London. Back came a telegram that we would have to send out a new team. Well, I'd never been in Iran before, I was all right, but other members of the staff were. Well, this was a high political issue, because do you accept sort of a dictat from the government who you are going to appoint as your diplomats.

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Unfortunately, both Eden and Churchill, the Prime Minister, were at the time in Bermuda for a conference with President Eisenhower.

And so no decision could be taken immediately but telegrams were sent to Bermuda and Eden and Churchill must have conferred about it. And I was told to see Eden the moment he got back from Bermuda. And I saw him on Saturday (I've forgotten the actual date; I can look it up for you if you like). I saw him and he said, "I accept this decision by the Iranians, except that you must have one man on your staff who knows his way around. Because you've got enormous great compounds and big buildings and you must have someone who knows." And he left it to me to choose who of these people, so I chose a man called John Fearnly, who had been the second secretary, I believe, in the commercial department before. He was not an undercover MI6 man or anything, but a straight commercial officer in the Foreign Office. He was at that time working in the United Nations department; and I had taken quite a fancy to him, I liked his ideas and so I opted for him. And we dropped the other people and at very short notice, other members were recruited to come in in their place.

And eventually we set off for Iran, I think on the 17th of

December, because Eden was determined -- although Christmas was very close -- he said we cannot not go ahead immediately, because the Shah would change his mind. We had a very low opinion of the Shah in London in those days and didn't trust him at all. So the thing was to get me out there quickly. And we went out in a little chartered airplane, spent the first night in Athens, the second night in Baghdad, and we eventually (because we got delayed by fog in London for a day, I think), after quite a rough passage because we had to go very high up to cross the Alborz mountains, we got to Tehran on the 21st of December.

Q. Can I just ask something at this point? I'd be interested to know in what way and to what extent a person such as yourself at that time was briefed as to the history of what was going on, the personalities, what you would be facing once you got there. Did you just simply read files, were there meetings, would they describe things to you?

A. Well the trouble was that I was head of a very busy department, there was no knowing when the Shah would agree to us, so I was kept on with my nose to the grindstone in this department without letting people know I was going to Iran. My wife knew, but we didn't tell people, generally. The result was that I really got no briefing at all until say

about the 5th of December, when I pulled out of the office, the communique was announced. And then I got some sort of a briefing, but it wasn't a very thorough one. I met people like Prof. Lambton, I talked to people in the Foreign Office. I was told that the British had been involved with the CIA in the coup in August 1953 and that there were two brothers called Rashidian who were involved, were close to the British Embassy at one time and I should avoid them and not get involved with them. And apart from that, I was given no details about the coup, I didn't ask details -- because one doesn't ask -- but I just knew that we had been involved. But I was warned against having dealings with the Rashidian people. Apart from that, I cannot recollect being given any real picture of the extraordinary, well I'd say love-hate relationships between, about which I have subsequently written. I mean that came all rather new to me.

But John Fearnly, the man I took out, I discovered that he had very strong views about what he called the "professional anglophiles" who hung around the embassy and so on. So when I went out, John Fearnly took a very firm line and I had found him as my chief advisor. He said, "Now, keep clear of all these people who will make almost a profession out of peddling influence in the British Embassy," and so on. And so, as I didn't know anybody, I had no commitments to

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anybody, we took a pretty tough line with people and I think it paid off. We tried to cut out what I call the intermediaries who existed and I'll come on to that in a little while's time.

But in answer to your question, the answer is no, I didn't have much briefing and of course, I made no attempt to learn Persian because I just was too busy, I mean I was running my department and so on.

Q. How about information about the main personalities you would meet, such as the Shah and General Zahedi, and those people?

A. Well, I can't remember what I was told, but of course we have our annual of personalities report which one can look into. The Shah -- I know because I used to see the telegrams coming in -- we had a very low opinion of him. We thought he'd handled the Mossadegh problem very weakly, he left the country, run away as we saw it -- things like that. So of the Shah, one hadn't got much of an opinion and that will come out later in what I have to say.

On Zahedi, in the House of Commons, I think Eden had congratulated him on the bold step in resuming relations with

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us, because of a certain ?? position to it and so on. So I went out with knowing full well that Zahedi had been a prisoner of the British in the war and that sort of thing, but regarding him as someone who was a strong man and what we, the British, wanted at that time in Iran was a strong government and Zahedi we saw as providing it.

Q. So the fact that he had been arrested by the British ten years before didn't...

A. Didn't, not a bit, no. In fact, when I first saw him in January, the 6th -- I was taken to see him by Mr. Asadollah Entezam, who was the Foreign Minister -- and I had quite a friendly talk with him about the oil settlement and what we were after and so on and then I ended up by saying that I hoped his wartime experiences had not given him too bad a view of the British. He gave me one of those so charming smiles of his and said, "No, you know, every country has its own policies." Insofar as I had any more dealings with him, they were always satisfactory. And we never wanted the Shah to get rid of Zahedi, although you see, the Shah was intensely jealous of Zahedi from the beginning -- I'll come back to that in a minute.

But in the course of the very crucial oil negotiations in

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1954, the Shah on more than one occasion put out feelers to the British ambassador, Roger Stevens and the American ambassador, Loy Henderson, and indirectly to me through some of his other ministers that Zahedi was corrupt, that he was no good, and he must be got rid of. And the line taken by both the British and American embassies was "don't swap horses in mid-stream." I mean you've got a man who's got the country under some sort of control and don't get rid of him.

To continue about Zahedi, the Shah in the end went to London and America in 1965, in the spring. And because nothing was said to him about Zahedi, one way or another...

Q. 1956.

A. '55. Yes, oil negotiation was '54 and then he went on, not a state visit, but he went on a private visit to London and to America. And nothing apparently was said to him about Zahedi; he took this to mean that there would be no objection if he got rid of Zahedi. So when he got back, he decided to sack Zahedi. Zahedi refused to resign. I mean this is part of Iranian history, it's not Anglo-Persian, but it's a very interesting account. I mean, Mr. Alam was sent up eventually to tell Zahedi that, "You've got to get out." If you look at the correspondence, items(?) in the press, the Shah says, "I

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accept your resignation and you can go on sick leave." And Zehedi had never resigned at all, it was just the Shah forced him out. He was just jealous of him. And Hossein Ali became prime minister.

Q. Before I interrupted you, you had begun to describe your arrival in Tehran. I think it would be useful to just take it chronologically from the day you arrived in Tehran and go from there.

A. Well, it was a very extraordinary beginning I had because I was met at the airport by the Swiss minister, Alfred Escher, who had an English wife, and by the minister in the American embassy, Bill Roundtree and some newspaper correspondents. There were armored cars and tanks -- the Iranians were very nervous about my arrival, had taken precautions, there had been demonstrations the night before.

Anyway, as I drove in from the airport to the British embassy, the Swiss minister said he had had a message from the Shah that asked me to arrange for me to meet two of his confidantes. And he had arranged for me to meet them at dinner the next night. And I said, "Who are they?" He said, "Well, one is a Persian," whose name I think he may have told

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me, but he didn't know anything about him, the name was Bahram Shahrokh and "the other one," he said, "is a Swiss subject, who's very close to the Shah, his name is Ernest Perron." I didn't like this idea of meeting the Shah's favorite almost immediately and the Swiss minister was living in the British embassy compound in Gholhak.

Next morning, the 22nd of December I made my first call on the American ambassador because he had been extremely helpful, as I mentioned already, in arranging the communique, helping with the communique and the terms to get ??. And I told him about this and I said, "I don't think I can avoid this. It's a message from the Shah, from the Swiss," And he said, "Well, I don't like it either, but you can't avoid it." That was that.

But that evening I went up to the Gholhak embassy to have dinner with the Eschers and there I found these two gentlemen. Well, after dinner the Swiss minister and his wife discreetly withdrew and left me with them and they started, Monsieur (what's his name) Shahrokh, Bahram Shahrokh did all the talking, wanted to find out what I had got by way of an oil settlement. They started criticizing the Prime Minister, Zahedi. They also said, "Would the British have any objection if the Shah dismissed Mr. Hossein Ali as

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minister of court?"

So, I said that I had no oil settlement, all I was concerned with was to report on and try and make arrangements for the beginning of negotiations. I said we wanted such things as fair compensation and so on, but I had no oil settlement. Secondly, as regards General Zahedi, I said only a few days previously Mr. Eden in the House of Commons had praised Mr. Zahedi for his courage in resuming relations. I said you can't expect to subscribe to any criticism of him. And thirdly, as regards Mr. Hossein Ali, I said, "What the Shah does with his ministers is not the affair of the British government at all, it's his business." I was rather short with them. Anyway, that was on the 22nd of December.

Q. Bahram Shahrokh, wasn't he the man who was on Radio Berlin? Is he the same man?

A. Yes, yes, that's the same man -- I'll come to this. I didn't know this at the time.

Well, the next day was the 23rd of the December and I went and paid my first call on the Iranian Foreign Minister, Asadollah (was it Asadollah, yes), Asadollah Entezam. Abdollah, Abdollah Entezam. We talked about the oil business

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and what I wanted to find out whether BP could go back -- I was pretty certain they couldn't, but nevertheless I was, if I could get them to go back 100%, that was what the British objective was.

Then I mentioned to him, just en passant, because I didn't like this dinner at all, you see, and I said, "I think you should know that last night, I met these people at the request of the Swiss minister, who'd been asked by the Shah." And I didn't give him the details. Well, that was the 23rd of December.

Q. What was his reaction?

A. He just...

Q. ?????

A. Yes, silent 24th of December, I was busy calling on other ambassadors and all that sort of thing. 25th of December, Christmas Day, we'd borrowed a certain amount of drink from the American embassy and I had a little party in my house with my own staff and a few of the British who were still in Tehran -- the Gibbs, the engineer people and people like that. In the middle of it, I got a telephone call from

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the Swiss minister, <he> said "Those two gentlemen you met the other night want to see you very urgently." So, I broke away from the party, they came 'round to see me. And they told me they had reported to the Shah, the Shah repeated he wished me to deal with them, with him direct through them on oil questions. That I had already made a very favorable impression on the Persian public after two days and he didn't want any ambassador appointed until the oil negotiations were completed. He didn't want any interference by the British in Persian affairs, etc., etc.

So, I expressed considerable doubts about all this. I said I hadn't got an oil settlement. At any rate, I would not wish to do anything on oil behind the back of the Iranian Foreign Minister or his Prime Minister. I would keep the Shah informed, but I must... That as regards an ambassador, I said, I already had the name of the ambassador, who is ... agreement, we wanted and it was just a question of waiting for time, for the right moment to ask for it. As regards interference, I can give you a pretty solemn assurance there will be no interference.

Q. Which of the two was doing the talking? Which of these two gentlemen was doing the talking?

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A. Bahram Shahrokh.

Q. The other one was the Shah's friend.

A. Perron, Ernest Perron. Well, then they went off and we had lunch and I suppose we drank quite a lot and so on, happy Christmas day. And I got another telephone call in the afternoon, four or five o'clock. These two gentlemen wish to see me again. So back they came and they said "We have been to see the Shah, reported our conversation and he wants us to give you a peu de papier, piece of paper, setting out his views." And if you like, I can read you out, because I have a copy of that, a part of it. Let me switch off while I get it.

Anyway, they came back after lunch and handed me this piece of paper. I am now quoting exactly from it. It read as follows.

Q. What language was it in?

A. In English, and not perfect English, there were a few mistakes, but...

All matters of diplomatic routine, including the oil matter, should be discussed by you with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Entezam. All matters of high policy, i.e., matters above or outside the diplomatic routine should be presented to His Majesty through Monsieur Perron and myself jointly. Since, however, the oil matter is of preliminary importance (I think he really meant by that primary importance, but it's preliminary importance) in the relations of the two countries, His Majesty wishes that after you have made your studies and reported to your government and have received suggestions on the manner the oil matter should be or could be settled, that you inform through this channel <Perron and myself> His Majesty in advance; and before you present them to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, you await His Majesty's approval or counter-proposals. Thus His Majesty wishes to avoid any serious difficulties arising from the negotiations.

His Majesty accepts the principles suggested by your government: 1) that the principle of compensation to the AIOC (that's the Iranian Oil Company) should stand firm subject to a generous treatment by your government. And 2) that the profits of Persia in oil

should not be higher than in other countries in the Middle East, though the formula must be face-saving for the Persian government.

With regards to the nomination of your ambassador, His Majesty is not opposed to your approaching Mr. Entezam for agreement. But His Majesty emphatically wishes that 1) this should be done without much publicity and 2) that the ambassador comes when oil negotiations have reached their final stage near a settlement. His Majesty states as reasons the following:

.lm+3

- a) the Persian public opinion has already got used to Mr. Wright and regards him already with certain sympathy.
(I'd been there two days, I might add.) Thus it would be much easier to conduct the negotiations with Mr. Wright without a new embarrassment. The Persian would thus keep favorably quiet until the results of the negotiations are known.
- b) His Majesty wishes to make the best use of the day when the new British ambassador presents his credentials to His Majesty. His Majesty intends to speak very friendly words which would subsequently switch over the Persian public opinion to a friendly spirit vis-a-vis Britain.

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His Majesty wishes to add to this morning's statement that in his conversations with Mr. Nixon (Nixon had been on a visit to Iran just before this, must have been in the winter of 1953), His Majesty did not only strongly suggest noninterference in the internal affairs of Iran, but His Majesty also emphatically asked Mr. Nixon, i.e., the U.S. government, to coordinate a policy in and for Persia with United Kingdom, for otherwise it would be only the Russians who would profit. His Majesty wishes to have the real views of your government on this point and would appreciate any suggestions your government might have.

On Sunday the 27th of December, His Majesty will leave for a holiday of ten to twelve days for Ramsar on the Caspian. However, a plane will stand ready for any message you may wish to convey to His Majesty through this channel.

That's the end of that. Well, after reading this memorandum, I expressed my dislike of the proposal that I should deal direct with the Shah on oil and suggested that I should see him to explain my attitude, though I emphasized that I would not want to do even this without the knowledge of Mr. Entezam. In addition to that, I also emphasized that we and the Americans were working in close cooperation in Iran, which was true.

Well, I slept on all that on Christmas Day and discussed it with Fearnly. The next morning, the 26th of December, I sent a telegram to London giving the full text of that message, saying what I didn't like this at all and I would like authority to inform the Persian Foreign Minister exactly what the Shah was up to. Well, the Foreign Office obviously went right up to Eden himself, and they authorized me to tell Entezam.

So the next time I saw Entezam (which was the 27th of December) I reminded him that at my first call on him I had mentioned having this dinner party, I said, "I now want you to know what has subsequently happened." I gave him a blow-by-blow account. He obviously was extremely worried by this and I said, "I can assure you that so long as I'm in charge here, I will do nothing behind your back on these oil negotiations." Well, that was that.

I of course kept this secret, didn't tell anybody, but the news got out very quickly. A few days later I was at a party where I met a French lady, Madame Fernon-Foroughi, the wife of Massoud Foroughi, who was then private secretary to Princess Shams. And she attacked me and said, "What's all this nonsense the way you're treating the Shah?" And I said, "What's it to do with you. I mean, what do you know about it?" Well, she knew all

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about it. And a few days later the Belgian minister came to see me and said, "I hear you're having a stand-up battle with the Shah, he's refusing to see you," and so on. I said, "He's not refused to see me, I haven't asked. I'm the charge d'affairs, I have no access to the Shah as such."

Anyway, the news got 'round. Then one day, I suppose it must have been about the 5th or 6th of January, the American ambassador phoned me up and said, "Come around and have a drink." I went 'round and had a drink and he said, "I've just seen the Shah, he's back from Ramsar and he's absolutely furious with you and with me too, because he thinks I put you up to it," which was quite untrue. Henderson had done nothing, but Henderson was very good, he said, "Well, don't worry at all. It won't do any harm in the long run." Well, that was that.

Well, I discovered later -- I mean I knew very little about Perron other than he was -- Fearnly knew he'd been sort of a liaison between the embassies, not only the British embassy and the Shah. And Bahram Shahrokh I didn't discover until some time later that he had been a German agent broadcasting from Radio Berlin and then he had come over to the British and had become a double agent and was working for both the Brtish and the <Germans>. The Shah was so angry with them for messing up this approach that he kicked Perron out of the palace where he was

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living and if you've ever read Queen Soraya's memoir, she talks about Perron as being the most sinister man in the court and so on. Well, he was kicked out of the palace and I believe tried to commit suicide. But anyway, he went to live with Princess Shams and Mr. Pahlbod, because he was a Roman Catholic and as you know Princess Shams was a Roman Catholic. He lived there until he died.

Shahrokh was exiled to Kermanshah but he came 'round to see me before, almost in tears and said, "Look, we've gotten into terrible trouble with the Shah for this. I've been exiled and it's not my fault. I'm a good friend of the British, look I have <a> letter from Mr. Geoffrey Keating of BP or Anglo-Iranian and also from Mr. Arthur Chisolm of BP -- they're good friends of mine. I went to prison under Mossadegh." I said, "I don't care a damn. I'm not going to deal with intermediaries and as far as I'm concerned, I don't have any more doings." And that's the last time I saw him until I went back to Iran as ambassador when he turned up.

Anyway, the Shah was very angry with me and there was a celebration of his third anniversary of his marriage to Princess, to Soraya (I think on February the 5th or 6th, somewhere around about then). And I was there with all the diplomatic corps. Now the then ambassador-designate to London

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was Ali Soheili, who had been there before as ambassador and had been prime minister at one time in the war. He knew all about this row and he got hold of me that day and said, "Look, I'm going to make the Shah talk to you today, you hang by me." So at this great, glittering reception in the marble palace, diplomats all lined up and the Shah comes down the line with the Shahbanou (though she wasn't called Shahbanou in those days), Queen Soraya, and when he got to me he just shook me by the hand and didn't say a word, he went straight on. Then Soraya came down and she called me up and we had a few words. Then Soheili beckoned me and we went into the next room for a buffet dinner. And Soheili went up to the Shah and got involved in obviously quite a tough argument with him. He told me later it was all about, he said, "You've got to talk to Denis Wright."

And the Shah said, "Why the hell should I? There's an ambassador coming next week. I'm not going to talk to him." Soheili was a tough character and after a pretty long argument he called me up and I was introduced to the Shah. Then we got on, I said to the Shah, "I'm sorry if there was a misunderstanding." He just ignored what I said. And he went on talking about his plans for reform and so on, he said "Some people call me a socialist," but I can't remember, I didn't record the conversation in detail. Anyway, he wouldn't stop talking and in the end -- of course all the diplomatic corps

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knew I was in the center of this row with the Shah, they were all watching -- and suddenly, the Queen Soraya came up and said to the Shah, "Look, we went to start dancing, come on," so she pulled him away. And that was that.

After that I had no serious troubles with the Shah. I mean, I think in some ways it did me a lot of good because I think he knew after that that I wasn't going to stand any nonsense from him. So that was a curious incident right at the beginning of my career, which in fact I think probably helped me in my later relationships with the Shah.

Q. Do you remember your first impressions, that must have been the first time you ever saw the Shah? You must have had certain images of him. Did the images....

A. Yes. It's difficult to recollect now, but he struck me as a serious man. I mean that talk we had standing up at the buffet dinner table was a serious one and he was talking about his plans for the country and obviously seemed to be rather a visionary or something.

Q. So what was the next event...?

A. Well, of course also that summer there was...

Q. When did the ambassador come?

A. He came a week later, about the 17th or something.

Q. The was Sir Harrison.

A. Sir Roger Stevens.

Q. Stevens?

A. Yes, Harrison succeeded me. I preceeded; he succeeded Stevens and I went after Harrison. But Sir Roger Stevens, who was an old friend of mine, came. Now he came by chance, because the original idea had been that a man called Robin Hankey, the present Lord Hankey who had been in Iran as a first secretary at one period in the war, got on very well with the Shah -- he used to play tennis with him. At some stage w. le there was a break in diplomatic relations, the Shah said to Eeher, the Swiss minister, that he would like to see someone like Hankey back. So Hankey was earmarked to come to Tehran as ambassador as soon as I got going. But then after the news that they didn't want anybody who had ever served in Iran before, they decided to drop Hankey. Roger Stevens, who was ambassador in Sweden, was told to get ready to come; and Hankey went to Sweden as ambassador

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and Stevens -- very reluctantly, he didn't want to come, he liked Sweden, but he very quickly got very fond of Iran and was, I think, a very good ambassador.

Because he had no commitments to Iran and so on, he listened very much to the views I gave him and that Fearnly gave him by cutting out intermediaries and the professional anglophiles and trying to get on to a new basis with the Shah. And I think we did succeed, I mean not entirely because the Shah couldn't resist using some one or another of his intimates as an intermediary and of course he was too busy to see us all the time. But in his book, Mission for My Country, he does say there that after 1954 the British attitude towards Iran was impeccable -- I've forgotten where, but you can find it in Mission for My Country.

But for a time I think we did convince the Shah that we were not stirring up trouble, although as you know all too well, I mean time and again it's come out since then that the Shah was always suspicious, very suspicious of the British and always saw our hand, when I was ambassador, behind things -- whether it was Kurdish troubles or Bakhtiar, who had been head of Savak, thought we were supporting him -- all those things, it came up time and again during my stay as ambassador in Iran.

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Q. So what is the next thing you remember after the initial first days.

A. I mean I've forgotten the details of the oil negotiations. I was involved with them but I wasn't ambassador and so on. I think the next thing is probably the coming into the Baghdad Pact in '55, because in July 1955 Roger Stevens went back to England on leave and I was left in charge. And the Shah, after the oil settlement had been reached in August 1954, showed increasing interest in defense arrangements. And as we the British saw it, his interest was primarily to bolster his own position at home, he wanted a strong army and so on. And he was making suggestions that he should join the pact already in existence between Turkey and Pakistan and -- I don't know whether Iraq was in it then, it was the beginnings of the Baghdad Pact -- and was asking us for assistance. He looked to the Americans for most of his arms, but he wanted us to act as intermediaries with the Americans so he could come into the pact.

And the British line was that we were very happy to see him in the pact, but we thought the question of timing was all important. And we, we didn't perhaps say this to the Shah, but our judgment was based on the fact that the economic situation in Iran was very precarious. We also were worried that if he were to take some precipitous step to come into the pact with

Pakistan and Turkey, he would cause political difficulties for himself and increase the instability of the country -- because at that time the country was in a very brittle state. So we were not at all encouraging about him coming in.

Well, after Roger Stevens went home on leave, I was twice summoned to the palace up at Sadebad in the hills by the Shah and found that the American ambassador and the newly arrived Seddon Chapin had also been summoned. The Shah tackled us about coming into a pact and what would we do to induce him. He wanted territorial guarantees, he wanted supplies of arms. So the line I took, on instructions from London, was "you must make up your own mind and we're not prepared to give you any inducements to come in. We would like to see you in a pact, but the timing must be entirely yours." He didn't like this. Chapin took, I think -- I can't remember correctly -- very much the same line, although earlier the Americans had put pressure on the Shah to come into the what was then the incipient Baghdad Pact. But I think they came 'round to our view that the internal situation was such that it was unwise to force the pact. So by the time, July, I was seeing the Shah with Chapin, he was really taking the same line as myself -- would welcome the Shah in a pact, but the timing was up to him and we'd give no guarantees.

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Well, in September of that year, the Turkish President Jalal Bayar and his foreign minister Zorlu came to Iran on a state visit. The Turks had told us in Ankara before they left that wouldn't put any pressure on the Shah to come into any pact. But in fact they put great pressure on him when they came; and Zorlu, the foreign minister, summoned me to the Turkish embassy to say look, the Shah would come into the pact immediately if the British would only change their line. And I said, "Well, my impression is that it would be a very unpopular move. There's nobody in Iran that I know of, except Mr. Ali Amini (who was then, I think minister of justice), apart from him I know nobody who is interested in or who wanted to come into the pact." He said, "Well, my ambassador tells me that the whole of public opinion is in favor of coming into the pact." I said, "It's quite untrue." He said would I telegraph to London -- Macmillan was then Foreign Secretary -- and have your instructions changed? I said, "Okay, I'll do this, but I don't think there will be any change. I'm not going to recommend it." And I telegraphed the Turkish views and was told to stick to the British line. And I think the same thing went for the Americans, I don't know.

I might add at this stage that Entezam, who was still Foreign Minister, was obviously very unhappy with this pressure by the Shah to come into the pact -- and he had been in San Francisco

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since the early summer for what would be the tenth anniversary of the San Francisco United Nations charter, it was 194-, yes it would have been the tenth anniversary. He kept out of Tehran, he just wouldn't come back to Iran. And I got asked by the Shah, "Where is Mr. Entezam?" you see. And I think Entezam, I mean the Dervish, he used to play this game and eventually the Shah sent instructions he was to come back for the Turkish visit. So he came back about three days before the Turkish visit, having been absent for two or three months.

At a dinner at Golestan Palace for the Turks, Ali Amini got hold of me and brought a reluctant Entezam into the conversation to say that, trying to get me to say that the Iranians must come into the pact. And I took the same line. Well, Ali Amini was obviously very enthusiastic about this, why I don't know. I suspect because he knew the Shah wanted this and perhaps it was his step to becoming prime minister, I don't know. Anyway, he arranged next day for me to see Entezam at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with himself. I had an hour, an hour and a half talk there on this whole subject. Entezam making it quite clear that he shared the British view that the situation was too delicate in Iran to force the pace.

Q. Will you describe this internal situation that you refer to?

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A. Well, only that, you know, economically Iran had lost the oil revenue and the consortium didn't get going again until 1955, you see. I mean there was hardly any revenue coming in at all. So the situation was not an easy one. There had been a military governor of, it was Bakhtiar, Shahpour Bakhtiar, not Shahpour...

Q. Teimour.

A. Teimour Bakhtiar and there had been sort of fairly strict controls and the whole country was in an economically fragile position. I can't remember the details. There was no sign of any enthusiasm for coming into any Western-sponsored pact.

Q. How would you gauge the signs in those days? How would gauge the signs of public support for something of this sort?

A. Well, by a few friends. I mean, we had in those days the remnants of the old Oriental Secretariat. We built up our staff and Fearnly, who spoke good Persian, had moved over to the Oriental Secretariat and he had a member of his staff, an Iranian who was Sadjadi (Temanan ol-Molk he was known as) who was I suppose in touch with a number of Iranians who reflected views and it was through him I suppose we got a lot of...he was a friend of Seyyed Zia, he was a friend of people like

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Arabshaihani, much of the old school of liberals. Shall we switch off a minute?

Q. You were describing how you were able to assess public opinion.

A. Insofar as one had, I earnedly talked quite good Persian, he had friends among Persians. We had this man Sadjadi who was in touch with a pretty wide circle of friends -- Sadr Fakher who was president of the Majlis (I don't know what he was then), but that sort of group, what you call is these Anjomen, what you call...

Q. Doreh?

A. Doreh, doreh, he had his dorehs, yes. I suppose that was our main gauge, because I didn't talk any Persian and in those days we were very restricted on travel around. No member of the embassy went traveling around the country until, I think May '55, I did my first tour around the country -- I went down to Shiraz and Boushehr, I don't think I went to Bandar Abbas. Yes I went 'round the country with the information officer, who was a man called Borroughs, what you call a press attache. I mean he wasn't an intelligence officer or anything. We traveled right through Shiraz, Zahedan, and then to up to Mashhad and

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back, I think, through Shahroud to Tehran. There one got some sort of feel talking to people. I say I had to do it in English, but there were a lot of English speakers around.

And one of the conclusions of that visit was that I strongly recommended to the ambassador that we should not attempt to reopen consulates around the country, because all the consulates had been closed by Mossadegh and the Iranian press, then as now, is full of rumors and the rumors they had when I was going around this time was that I was going around with a view to, preparing for the reopening of British consulates all over the country. In fact, it was rather the reverse. I came back and strongly recommended that because of Iranian suspicions, going back to 19th century, of what consuls were up to in their country -- particularly in World War I and World War II when they got involved with the tribes and so on -- we should not open any consulates unless there were large British communities, which there weren't except at Khorramshahr where I said I thought we should have someone because of the oil business and it would be very important to keep our finger on the pulse on what opinion was down in Khouzestan in particular. And that recommendation was accepted and we never did open any consulates in Iran after the break except in Khorramshahr and of course Tehran.

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Anyway, that was the journey I did 'round Iran. It was a very bleak picture one saw. There were sort of military controls at every town one entered and the primitive conditions in Azerbaijan were remarkable. I don't think I've got any more to say on that.

Q. Well, you were describing the meeting you had with Amini and Entezam regarding the Baghdad Pact when I interrupted you and asked you about the internal situation. Now could you take it from there?

A. Yes, well what happened then was that the Shah decided, under Turkish pressure, to come into the pact. The Turks, I think, I mean they must have said, "You come in. The Americans will cough up, the British will cough up," and all of this, which is exactly what happened in the end. So the Shah took the plunge, announced it later in October -- I by then had left, I'd been transferred back to London -- that he was coming into, joining the pact and the British issued some statement showing their interest in the territorial integrity of Iran; they didn't guarantee it, but they... And the Americans came out with some sort of statement too in support. So he got into what became the Baghdad Pact. And I had left Iran then, by then.

Q. You left when?

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A. I think the 6th of October 1955 and was sent back to London on promotion to be an undersecretary in charge of economic affairs. As such, I didn't have very much to do with Iran except on economic affairs and the Baghdad Pact Economic Committee and so on. But in January or February 1959, I got involved again in Baghdad Pact matters almost by accident. I'll just look up the dates, perhaps you could switch off for a minute while I just get the exact...



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDGH
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

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TAPE No.: 2

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 10, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape No. 2

Q. What was the date you...

A. At the end of January 1959, I had gone to Karachi for ... as leader of the British economic delegation at the Baghdad Pact meeting. Then after that I was to spend a week on leave in Tehran. I was going to stay in Tehran and then go down to Isfahan. And in Karachi, Dr. Eghbal, who was prime minister, and Gen. Arfa' who was the Iranian ambassador in Ankara and I think also ?? to Pakistan (or he may not, but he was there),

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both of them got hold of me and expressed great worries about the Shah's attitude to what was the possible bilateral pact with the Americans. And said that they understood the British had let it be known they were opposed to Iran signing up an agreement with the Americans.

I don't know the details, I can't remember the details, but they were obviously very worried about the Shah's general policies and so on and tried to get me involved. I did a long paper, minute for the British minister who came out for the main political meeting of the pact, who was Duncan Sandys, who was minister of defense. I haven't seen that minute since and I've forgotten exactly what I said, but I voiced these doubts of Eghbal and Arfa', both of whom I knew from my earlier existence in Iran. I'm just trying to recollect. They also told me that somebody at the British embassy in Tehran had apparently let it be known that we were opposed to this pact. I think they mentioned that it was the consul, a man called John Russell (who died quite recently, about a month ago).

Anyway, I'd reported all this to Duncan Sandys and then went to Tehran for what was to be a holiday. I had no intention of seeing the Shah or anybody. Well at dinner that night at the British embassy (I was staying with Russell, not with the

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ambassador, the newly arrived Harrison who had been there since November), there was Hossein Aia who was minister of court. Now, we knew from very secret sources -- I don't know what they were, but they were secret -- that the Russian delegation had arrived in Tehran that day to negotiate a nonaggression pact with the Shah and this tied up with what Eghbal and Afra' were saying to me in Karachi two or three days previously, although I didn't know this then. At dinner that night, Hossein Aia didn't tell us that the Russians were there but he said, "You must go and see the Shah," to me. I said, "I haven't got the clothes, I haven't come here on any official business but I'll go and sign the book tomorrow morning." Well, the next day I went to sign the book...

Q. What does that mean "to sign the book."

A. The Shah had a book for visitors, you know, just an act of courtesy. I went to sign the book at the palace and his chef de protocole, who was Mohsen Gharagozliou, a brother-in-law of Alem, took me to his room after I had signed the book to have a cup of tea or coffee; and Aia got through on the telephone from his office and said "I've arranged for you to see the Shah tomorrow morning," or whatever day it was. He'd never called me by my first name before, it was always Mr. Wright, but this time he said, "My

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dear Denis, you must talk to the Shah very frankly." I knew what he meant, because we knew from secret sources.

Well at lunch that day -- I wasn't present -- Harrison was at lunch and met Ali who told Harrison that the Russians are here negotiating with the Shah, which is quite a courageous thing to do, I mean he was giving away a secret. We telegraphed London that I was seeing the Shah and got instructions on what they wanted me to say, so I got long instructions that I must do everything possible to stop him signing a nonaggression pact with the Russians.

So I went in to see the Shah the next day and had an hour and a half with him. The conversation was eventually interrupted by one of the courtiers, I think Mohsen Gharagozlu coming in and telling him that the Pakistan ambassador was waiting outside for the last half hour and all that sort of thing. Anyway we had a ding-dong battle because the Shah very quickly told me that he was fed up with his allies and the Baghdad Pact, that he wasn't getting the equipment he deserved. That the Turks and even the Afghans, who weren't in the pact, were doing much better and that he was fed up and therefore was going to do a deal with the Russians. And so I argued that if he did that, first of all it would be the end of the Baghdad Pact and I said that "Ultimately it would

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be the end of Your Majesty. The Russians don't like kings." He said, "You treat me like a kept woman." I remember I said to him, "Well, Your Majesty, kept women, if they behave themselves, earn fur coats sometimes."

Q. Is that right?

A. Anyway, we battled away. Well, that must have been a Thursday. On Friday I went skiing. On Saturday I went to call on Seyyed Zia Tebatabai. The reason being that when I had left Tehran, he had given my wife a number of his white rabbit skins (he used to breed rabbits and he gave her a number and we had a little cape made) and I wanted to give him a little present in return, I gave him a simple piece of Wedgewood pottery or something. Although Seyyed Zia was regarded as a sort of British stooge, as far as I know, certainly as far as I was concerned, he was never used in any way as a British agent in any form or -- he was too independent-minded. And when I went to have tea with him this day, he said "I hear you've been to see the Shah and he's not going to sign with the Russians." I was astounded that he knew. What I didn't know at the time, but I should have known, I suppose, was that he used to see the Shah every Saturday morning and he had been to see the Shah that morning and the Shah had...

Well, what came out later was that Seyyed Zia was the third man in all this thing and was acting as an intermediary, whether on his own volition or on behalf of the Russians, or on behalf of the Shah -- I suspect on behalf of the Shah. But when the Shah came to London on his state visit in May of 1959 (I think it was May, Macmillan was then prime minister), he told both Macmillan and Hekmat who was the foreign minister, Asbgar Hekmat, told Shelby Lloyd, the foreign minister that until I arrived and spoke to the Shah, he believed that the British were in favor this pact with the Russians and it was because of this he was going ahead. In fact, he put all the blame on Seyyed Zia misinterpreting the British. Well, all I know is that Seyyed Zia was never in touch with the British Embassy at all, in was only by chance that after I left, after my conversation with him and then after we left, I think the British ambassador discovered that Seyyed Zia was the intermediary. But a very interesting little episode.

The Shah had, in my judgment, it's never absolutely certain, he took the initiative in getting in touch with the Russians. That when he was caught, as it were, he lied completely and put all the blame on Seyyed Zia in misunderstanding what the British were after. And he would have signed with the

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Russians, according to what Seyyed Zia said, if the Russians hesitated over abrogating Articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 Russian-Persian treaty which gave the Russians certain rights to intervene in Persia if Persia was used as a base for anti-Russian activities. And the Russians hesitated about cancelling those articles and it was that that held it up and eventually, when the Russians agreed to withdraw these articles, it was too late, because the pressure -- a) there had been my thing, then Duncan Sands came, President of Turkey came, Eisenhower sent messages -- you know, tremendous pressure on the Shah and he withdrew. And of course he got into great trouble with the Russians.

Q. Now, before we move to the next period of your contact with Iranian officials, I wanted to go back to the period you've already discussed. And if we could begin with the negotiations which ended up in the oil settlement and if you could describe the various roles that various Iranian individuals played -- the Shah, Gen. Zahedi, the foreign minister and Dr. Amini, who from the Iranian point of view seems to have been the key man. Or was he really the key man?

A. No doubt at all Amini was the key figure on this. And his team -- I've forgotten the full composition, but he had

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as his legal advisor and interpreter So'ad Rohani, who became first Director-General of OPEC. There was, was it Nasrollah Naficy (I've forgotten his first name), but he was one of the Bayat, heads, of the National Iranian Oil Company. But the really effective person was Amini, who conducted very brilliant negotiations. Entezam didn't take part in them, but there was always a sort of -- he was a close friend of Ali Amini's. He was always there if we got into trouble, one could go to him and tell him *<how>* things were going.

But of course the oil negotiations were essentially between the oil companies and the Iranians; and the British and American Embassies did not sit at the table. The only negotiations we were involved in were the compensation negotiations for BP, and Roger Stevens led the British delegation (I was a member of that delegation) and we were negotiating with Amini there too. But I've forgotten the details; at any rate I wasn't so directly involved because it was the ambassador who was doing it and I was more or less running the embassy.

On the consortium side, the first leader had been a man called Hardin (I've forgotten which oil company he...) and then came Howard Page, who was a very effective negotiator. BP sent a man called Snow, who kept pretty quiet (because BP

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were, after all, the people who had been ostracized until towards the end when he became a very respected figure among the Iranians and he played a very useful role. But the most effective of all the negotiators was the Shell man, John Louden, the Dutchman, who had a very cosmopolitan, smooth sort of manner and he got on socially with the Iranians, better than the other rougher oil men from England and America. He was very effective and ??slight gloss on all this??

Some years later when I was ambassador in Iran, Louden was retiring from being chairman of Shell and came out to Tehran and the Middle East on a farewell visit. He was staying with me. Although he was a Dutchman, he didn't know the Dutch ambassador, and I asked him what sort of dinner or reception he'd like me to give. He said he would like to meet all the key negotiators of the '54 agreement and there were three of them. There was Ali Amini, Fo'ad Robeni and Entezam -- all of them were in trouble with the Shah in one greater or less degree. And I knew that if I had them to dinner and the Shah heard about it, I should be in trouble. So knowing the Shah as an intensely suspicious man, I decided I would have them to dinner, but I would send him a message. I sent him a message through Minister of Court Alem to say that I was having these gentlemen to dinner, but there was no conspiracy

by the British ambassador and all was well. Unlike my American colleague Armin Meyer, who some time about then had Ali Amini to dinner without telling the Shah and he was in the doghouse with the Shah for quite a long time afterwards.

Q. I heard this recently from Ted Eliot, who at that time was in the State Department, and I was quite amazed that the Shah was able to threaten the U.S. ambassador by telling him that he's going to ask for him to be sent home if he continued to behave that way. For an Iranian, it is still very hard to accept that the Shah had this kind of power over the ambassadors.

A. Well, in one way I may have saved the American ambassador from being kicked out at one time because -- it was in 1966 or '67, I mean we're jumping ahead now. But one day the Foreign Minister Arem telephoned me and I was up at Gholhak, it was the summer and he said would I go down and see him urgently in his office. And I went down from Gholhak. He said, "Look, I'm in terrible trouble. The American ambassador has been round to talk to me about the Shah's dealing with the Russians on arms and he's been using such language that if I told the Shah, he will ask for his immediate expulsion." He said, "I don't know what to do about it. I'm a servant of the Shah. Armin Meyer has told

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me that the Shah would be all chewed up (he used the word) if he goes on and does this deal with the Russians." I said, "Look, you can't, let's get Armin Meyer to apologize to you and ask you to forget about it." He said, "Well, if he would do that and come 'round and see me, I would say nothing about it."

So I phoned up Armin Meyer and said, "Look, I must see you." Armin Meyer was very jealous of me, you know, he was a small-minded man in a way. And I phoned him up and said, "I want to see you very urgently." I went 'round, he reluctantly saw me, he was dressing to go out to dinner -- I saw him in his pajamas or dressing gown, he'd come out of a bath or something. I told him this, I said, "Look, I'm doing this just as a friend of America. You are in serious trouble. I know the Iranians, I know the Shah, and if you don't do something very quick, you're in serious trouble." And he did go 'round to see Aram and withdrew what he said, and that was that.

I had the same problem in my own counselor, Horace Phillips, in 1964, October. Ali Mansour was prime minister and the Shah had assured the American ambassador that a bill giving certain immunities to American forces in Iran would go through at the same time as the new Vienna Convention on

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diplomatic privileges would go through. Ali Mansour was rather new to the game, he hadn't been properly briefed perhaps. There was a strong anti-American feeling at the time. Seventy-odd deputies either abstained or, in a few cases, actually voted against giving any immunities to the Americans.

Well, the Shah was furious and he blamed Ali Mansour; for about three days, all the heat was on Ali Mansour. Then I got a telephone call from Aram, the Foreign Minister, and also from Alam, who was not Minister of Court then, he was, I think, vice-chancellor of Shiraz University and was just about to go off that day to America on a trip. They both telephoned me within a quarter of an hour of each other and said they wished to see me immediately. Aram was in bed with flu and Alam was at his house. So I said, "All right," I told one or the other, I said, "Look, I'll come and see you and then I'll go straight on to see Mr. Alam," or vice versa. Well, they both said the same thing, "Look, somebody has convinced the Shah that it's the British who are behind this anti-American vote. The Shah thinks it's you personally <me> and he's worked out that all the seventy deputies are close to the British embassy and you must act very quickly to disabuse him of this."

So, I said, "Well, I shall see the Shah tomorrow night at ... his brother is marrying Dr. Eghbal's daughter and there will be a big party at the Officers Club and the Shah is bound to talk to me." Well, I went to this party and the Shah ignored me entirely, absolutely ignored me. So by then Alem had gone to America but Aram was still about, still in bed (with the flu). I went back to see him and I said, "Look..." He said, "Well, you must act immediately."

So I phoned up the Minister of Court, who was Ghods Nakhaii, and said, "I wish to see the Shah immediately." So I got an audience straight away and went 'round -- he was at the Marble Palace, he was still working downtown. And I, after the usual exchange of pleasantries, I said, "I understand that Your Majesty thinks I'm intriguing against your present government. Can you tell me why I should be doing this?" I looked him straight in the face, you see. He wouldn't look me in the face, he just said, "I accept your word." So I went on and said, "You may remember, Your Majesty, when I arrived in Tehran as ambassador you told me you wished me to see your prime minister regularly." I said, "This was Mr. Alem." And I said, "You were kind enough to say that I could ride your horses at Ferehbad and, as you know, every Friday my wife and I go riding there and usually with Mr. Alem. When he ceased to be prime minister, because he's a friend of

nine, I decided to keep on doing this and I told your new prime minister, Mr. Ali Mansour, that I would do this and he wasn't to think it was anything against him." I said, "What more could I do?" And he just dropped it like a hot cake.

But what I heard afterwards from Aram was that, he had said that Horace Phillips, my counselor, was to be expelled because apparently someone had gone to him and said that Phillips had said something which implied the British were behind this, which was of course absolutely untrue.

That was the sort of thing one was up against and his enormous vindictiveness and power to... I don't think I ever got into trouble with him. Once I got ... just before I left Tehran, when we were having trouble about the islands. Somebody came to see me and the Shah had told him that I was -- it was Shahpour Reporter who came to see me and said that the Shah had told him that I was conceited, etc., a number of things. I wrote, telegraphed London and said, "If this is true, I've ceased to be of any value." So I went to Aram and said, "Look, I've heard this. Will you check up with the Shah and what's he worried about?" I think I said that over the islands, if the Iranians seized the islands while the British were still protecting them, it would mean we would be at war, because I said we would be bound to react. Anyway,

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Alam said, "Oh, the Shah was just joking," and that was that. So I never heard anymore.

So on the whole I had no troubles with the Shah, but I think it was probably because, going right back to that first incident I recounted, he was always a little frightened of me. I don't know, that's what I've been told by others.

Q. Well, again going back to that early period when you were in Iran, I wonder if you could give me your assessment of the various people who were in positions of power at that time, perhaps beginning with General Zahedi -- what did you think of him as a person or as a prime minister?

A. Well, it's awfully difficult to remember, but I think we regarded him as a strong man, regarded him as a corrupt man, regarded him as a womanizer, like his son. We haven't got any... but we were mainly concerned to have a strong military hand from that point of view, from the British point of view, he seemed to us to be the best bet for Iran. And when people used to come 'round, as you know, Iranians would always come 'round and complain -- they would tell us how corrupt he was and all this stuff -- we'd say, "Okay, but he's a strong man and you haven't had a strong prime minister for a long time." So that was, I think, our assessment of him.

Q. When he was changed or replaced by Mr. Ala, were you still in Iran at that time?

A. Yes.

Q. You seem to indicate that the only signal that the Shah felt he needed to get was lack of mention of Zahedi's name when he was in London. Was that really the extent of it, did he check with you or any of your people, given you forewarning that he was about to do this?

A. No. He just, let's see, when he went 'round America and England whenever it was, May of '55, because nothing was said to him in praise or anything of Zahedi, he said, "Okay, I can get rid of him." So he acted. As best of my knowledge, he never asked us about Hossein Ala as a possible prime minister. Of those days, I have the greatest affection and love for Hossein Ala, but I don't think we thought much of him in those days, certainly not as a strong prime minister. I think we, he was a sick man too -- he'd had an operation, come back from Europe. It was indicative, the Shah meant to run the country himself.

Q. This will come as a surprise to many Iranians who will

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listen to these tapes in the future, because they would assume that at that stage, the Shah would not make such a major move without getting the assent of...

A. No, no. I'm reasonably certain, because Roger Stevens kept me informed, I saw all the papers, I mean I don't think there was any question. I say, we were not in favor of Ala as a prime minister at that time. What we did, and I think Stevens did make the point when Ala appointed Hamzavi to be his -- Hamzavi was always regarded as a British agent and so on, and he was close to the British -- but when he made him his court deputy prime minister, Roger Stevens did say to Ala (who told Hamzavi, who complained to me, you know), "Why do you have such bufoons like Hamzavi in your government?" But that was about all I could say in terms of any British interference.

In my own case, when I was charge d'affairs in the summer of 1955, Ebtehaj was head of the Plan Organization and there were signs before I left Tehran that the Shah was thinking of getting rid of him. And I, without any instructions from London, I took the line when I saw the Shah of saying something in favor of Ebtehaj, because we at that time certainly thought Ebtehaj was a driving force, we regarded him as an honest chap. And although he had quarreled with

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the British Bank of the Middle East or the Imperial Bank and so on, that didn't rankle with us in the embassy. We regarded him as a good man who was highly thought of by the World Bank and so on. And I did say something to the Shah to let him know that we thought it would be a great pity if he were to be removed from the Plan Organization. Because you remember, there were tremendous attacks on him from... But I'm pretty certain that, apart from that mentioning of Ebtehaj and Hamzavi, we kept absolutely clean on talking about personalities.

Q. What was your assessment of Entezam as Foreign Minister?

A. Well, we had very high regard for him, because he was <a> so patently honest man. He handled the early stages of the oil negotiations with me, and then with Roger Stevens, brilliantly I think. He was unflappable and basically so patently honest. So we had a very high opinion of him.

Q. And while you were there, there was at least one election to the Majlis. Did you have any interest or role or any kind of dealing in the elections?

A. None whatsoever. We got, just after I arrived there, an anonymous letter -- I discovered who it was from later, a man

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called Ghaffari -- who urged the British to intervene, you see, in the elections because it was going to be packed by American candidates. This came to me through Masoud Foroughi. I went to Masoud Foroughi and said to him that this sort of thing, that we get these letters, I said, "Anybody who sends me this is an enemy of my country and of America, and we're standing firm." I gave a press conference about that time, I haven't got a clipping of it, but I did give it where I make it quite clear that the people who were trying to split us and the Americans were not going to win.

Here it is, this was sent to me by... It's not worth reading out the whole thing. But this arrived with a letter in French from Masoud Foroughi enclosing this memorandum from a well-wisher, a good friend of the British and so on. "There are well-informed politicians who dare proclaim that the American policies responsible for this undue haste in the elections and that they want to acquire a majority in the parliament. It must be added that the government is openly opposing the candidates and persons whom they suppose are pro-British" and so on and so forth. I'm urged to intervene, you see. "The elections had to be postponed for at least three or four months, giving the British embassy enough time of giving assurances of their good faith, etc. Once the American money grant is eaten up, Washington should, through

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the British insinuation, encourage the government to sell its two million tons of oil and etc., etc."

Anyway, this was the sort of thing -- the anti-American element asking us to intervene in the elections. We absolutely set our face against any sort of intervention in these elections and I know Roger Stevens took exactly the same line. People used to come to us, asked to be made deputies for this or that and we gave them short shrift, we said, "This is not our business." And that went on all of my time as ambassador and I'm certain it went on under my predecessor, Harrison, too.

Q. So whatever interference there may have been during the 1940s did not continue.

A. No, I think not. You see, when we went back in 1953, we decided that there'd got to be an absolute break.

Q. I think we may have missed the last two sentences.

A. Roger Stevens and I took exactly the same line that we were not going to interfere and I'm reasonably certain that

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Geoffrey Harrison took the same line. And certainly when I went back to Tehran in '63 as ambassador, I took the same line. I've not seen anywhere any suggestion that the British, either secretly or less secretly, got involved in any way in trying to influence the elections. Or the time the Shah should have an election.

Q. Did you have any concern about the way the Shah was -- I suppose that maybe this should be asked later, but at least at that time -- the way he was beginning to concentrate power in his own hands. Did you have concern that this may have some negative repercussions?

A. I don't think we did in that first period, '53-'55. What we were worried about, we had very little faith in the Shah's character. Therefore, we didn't have much faith in his judgment or his collection of people he surrounded himself with. What we always looked for was, hoped for rather, looked for but hoped for that you'd get some strong man as prime minister, but the Shah would never tolerate it.

But I know in Roger Stevens' very last dispatch, when he left -- whenever he left, must have been '58, I think it was -- his line was that the British should have the minimum to do with the Shah and the royal family. He had a very low

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opinion of them. Certainly, when I went back to Tehran in 1963, my first dispatch -- I can quote from it, if you like -- was as long as the Shah was here, there's no good coming to this country. I revised my ideas later as the Shah seemed to take hold of it, but in those first few months I was in Tehran in 1963, I had a very poor view of the Shah and thought no good would come. I've got it here, I could actually quote.

This is a dispatch I sent on June 1963, what one calls one's first impressions. And I quote now:

I do not believe for one moment that the weakness of character and judgment that the Shah has shown in the past have been exorcised, though he gives an impression of maturity and better understanding of international problems. The country is waiting for leadership which somehow, despite all of the brave words, the Shah never quite provides. So long as the army and security forces remain loyal <and without them, the Shah is doomed> and allowed no alternative leader, no Mossadegh to emerge, the country will probably tag along for some time behind the only leader they have. But unless some progress is made to satisfy the material hopes raised by the reform program, there will eventually be

trouble.

Now that was '63. And that was, it reflected Roger Stevens' view too. I think that Harrison before he left, just before I arrived, saw a slight glimmer of hope in the Shah, he thought he was getting down to reform and so on. When I left the country, I'd come 'round to the same conclusion, that the Shah was providing, saw leadership which one hadn't suspected before.

Q. How about Seyyed Zia? What did you, how did you assess him as a person, as a leader, as a statesman?

A. Well, I regarded him as just an interesting, picturesque eccentric living in the country, farming. A modern Cincinnatus, you might say. There had been talk, at the time of the Mossadegh troubles, before I was involved in Persia, that he'd be a possible, suitable prime minister. I would never have subscribed to that, I don't think, because he was too much of a dilettante, a dreamer and so on. Although he was very close to John Fearnly (my Number 2) and to Sadjadi (the man I mentioned who was in the embassy), we, whether it was me or Roger Stevens or Harrison, never took him

seriously as a coming political figure.

Q. Well, perhaps now we can go to your return to Iran.

A. I must mention one little incident on my last ... in Tehran, because it's worth putting down, I think. I was recalled to London on promotion to be an undersecretary, to be back in London by October 1955. When the Shah heard I was going, he decided he'd give a dinner in honor of my wife and myself, a farewell dinner. And this took place in September, I think the 17th of September 1955, at Sadabad. Queen Soraya was abroad then, he was on his own and he, apparently he was rehearsing -- it's very interesting that a man called Shahpour Reporter was involved, close to the Shah then and we heard through Shahpour Reporter that there were going to be French wines at the dinner and that the Shah was rehearsing a little speech he was going to give.

Well, at this dinner, which took place in a tent, beautiful little tent up at Sadabad Palace, <there were> my wife and myself, two other members of the embassy staff and on the Iranian side, there was Asadolllah Alam, there was General Teimour Bakhtier (the

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head of SAVAK), there was General Nisari (the future head of SAVAK) . . .

Q. Nasiri.

A. Nasiri, and there was another Bakhtiar (who was a court chamberlain, who was around the court for years -- I've forgotten his name now, but he was a non-entity) and Shahpour Reporter. I wasn't asked who should be at the dinner, it was the Shah. And the Shah made a nice little speech, thanking me for having got relations going and so on.

Well after dinner -- a beautiful moonlight night, we sat in deck chairs; he got Bakthiar or one of them to take my wife and the other guests around to some of the other palaces, the little palace that Reza Shah had -- I was left sitting with the Shah in the moonlight with his big dog. And I had instructions from the Foreign Office that if before I left Tehran I had opportunity, I should first of all complain about an order for telephone equipment which had been given to Siemens when it was almost in the bag for the British Post Office or one of the British firms (I've forgotten) and we'd sent out. But the Shah had suddenly switched, we

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always believed it because Nemazee, one of Nemazee's wives was his mistress at the time, you know. I was told let it be known we regard this, really, a bit of dirty work. And secondly, if I had got an opportunity, I was to suggest that he should get tougher with the mullahs.

Well, I had the opportunity. The Shah was saying, you know, "relations are now on a very fine footing. We're back to as good a relationship as we've ever had; but the only trouble has been what the British press has been saying about the Baha'i troubles." You remember in that summer there was Baha'i trouble.

Q. But they destroyed, or...

A. The temple, Gen. Batmanghelich knocked down the temple. They murdered Fo'ad Rohani's brother. They murdered Baha'is in Yazd and Kerman and so on. It was a very nasty incident and there had been quite a British press criticism.

I knew from Alam that the Shah had been blackmailed by the clergy, particularly by Boroujerdi. And Alam had shown me, and in his house he had them (he was Minister

of interior then) a picture of Soraya in a bikini that had appeared in some American paper. And also, there was an account in another time that the Shah was alleged to be the father of a child by a Mrs. Cabot Lodge. They had gone to Alam and said, "Look, we're going to publicize all this unless," and the price was, "let us have a bash at the Bahai's."

Anyway, London knew all this and they said if I got a chance, I should say something to the Shah about being tougher. So I did, I said, "You know, my government..." he had known this criticism about the Bahai's, I said, "Well, who's responsible?" I said, "It's the clergy who have done it and we would like to see what your father did and get much tougher with the mullahs and the ulamas and so on." And he said, "I'm not strong enough." I've forgotten the words, but something like that.

Then I complained to him about the Siemens thing. He said -- it obviously hit him hard -- he said, "Strange, they (he didn't say who), they told me the British wanted the Germans to get the order." I said, "Absolute nonsense."

Two days later, he sent Shahpour Reporter ... The Shah was using Shahpour -- it wasn't the other way around, you see -- to see me, to say the Shah wished me to, he was very worried at what I said about Siemens and he was sorry about it and he would like to think that it was all over and when I saw him next, could I just let him know that, as far as I was concerned, I ... I mean, he was nervous at British reaction, you see. So I knew there was going to be a reception for the King of Saudi Arabia or something, and I said, "Yes, when I see the Shah there, I will say that that matter is finished." Well, I bowed over his hand, I did, I mean that was a... But the interesting thing about this dinner was that when later I was ambassador in Iran, I had been in the diplomatic corps for two years, but the Shah would never dream then of giving a dinner for any ambassador, as far as I know, let alone a counselor, chargé d'affaires which I was then and going to a lot of trouble to make a little speech. I just recount this, a curious little incident in my relations with the Shah.

Q. You mentioned General Bakhtiar as being one of the dinner guests. Did you ever meet him or get to know him or form any impression of him?

A. Yes, I didn't know him well. A very handsome chap. I met him in London once because he had two children who were, I think, down at Brighton or somewhere, staying with a family. He asked whether we could look them up and my mother lived near Brighton, so I went and saw these kids once. He was grateful and when he came to London, he came to see us about that in London. But I didn't know him well at all.

But I can tell you a curious incident about, again showing the Shah's extraordinary behavior. Bakhtiar, after he got into trouble with the Shah, was exiled to Switzerland. And he tried very hard, before I went as ambassador to Tehran, to see me. I was going over to Switzerland to do some skiing, get into practice again. And through his consul-general, the Shah's consul-general, Sanendaji, who was then consul-general, wrote to me when he heard I'd been appointed ambassador to say he wanted to come over to London to see me. And I said, "There's absolutely no point, I'm going to be in Geneva and I can see you then." So we had dinner.

Q. With Bakhtiar?

A. No, with Sanandaji and his wife.

Q. And it was one long tirade against the Shah and his land reforms. I mean, if I had repeated that at the time, then he would have been in prison or certainly lost his job. But I mean, he was absolutely fanatic. And then he said that "Gen. Bakhtiar is here and wants to see you." Well, I said, "I'm not prepared to see him." He said, "Well, you must see him." I said, "I'm very sorry."

Well, I was staying with an American friend, who had been in the London embassy, and Sanandaji knew I was staying there. So next day, Bakhtiar telephoned me there and said he wished to see me. And I refused, I said nothing doing. And I didn't see him, so that was that. Anyway, ??? as an aside, but later in, when he continued to be in disgrace, he turned up in Nice where the British consul was an old friend of his and called on the consul unannounced. And the consul reported this to London and to Tehran. So as soon as I heard this (I've forgotten what year it was, about '65, '66), I said, "We must tell the Shah, because once he hears of this from any other, we're in trouble." So I told the Shah and I said that this chap turned up

unannounced and had been given lunch by the British consul and that was that.

Well, about a year, or year or more later, Alam got hold of me and said, "There's very serious trouble for you. The Shah has information that the British are intriguing with Bakhtiar and are in touch with him through their consulates in Europe." So I said, "I don't think this is true, but I'll check up." So, we telegraphed to London and I said would they consult any of Bakhtiar's friends, I mentioned Prof. Lampton in particular, because she was a great admirer of Bakhtiar. And the answer came back, "No, nobody's seen him at all; the only one was this meeting in Nice." So I went back to Alam and said, "No, but you may remember that on such and such a date, I told the Shah about a meeting between Bakhtiar and our consul... Have you any other evidence?" And the Shah had to admit he'd got no other evidence, his memory had played him false. But that was the sort of suspicion I was up against with the Shah the whole time, you see.

Q. But while you were there in the '50s and he was, I suppose what, military governor of...

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A. Military governor and then became head of Savak,
just...

Q. Did you have any meetings with him or any...

A. I didn't know... I got again, ... he sent Shehpour Reporter and this is why I became very suspicious and have been ever since of Reporter's integrity, because when this Bahai trouble was at its height in the summer of '55, there had been criticism in the British press and so on and the Persians were worried. Reporter came to see the British ambassador, Roger Stevens, to tell him, "Look, I've just been in Gen. Bakhtiar's office and I heard him on the telephone giving instructions that there was to be a strong suppression of any attacks on the Bahais." and so on. He'd said he'd heard this by chance as a telephone conversation. I said, "I don't believe it for a minute. I don't believe you'd just go into Bakhtiar's office." And he'd gone straight 'round to the American embassy and told the Americans the same thing. And I guess he was used to prompt information.

Q. Trying to what, promote the idea that Bakhtiar had nothing to do with this?

A. No, that the Shah was taking notice and was clamping down hard, you see.

Q. I see.

A. And this was done at either the Shah's request or Bakhtiar's. But after that, I always regarded Shahpour Reporter as a, you might say, as an agent of the Shah as much as a British agent and never trusted him.

Q. I guess what I was trying to ask about Bakhtiar, since he was really the first head of the SAVAK and so much was made of the SAVAK in later years, what signs, if any, you had at the time as to what sort of a "monster" was being created and whether you had any thoughts about doing anything about it at the time?

A. No, I mean there were certain links between Bakhtiar, SAVAK, and our own intelligence people -- I'm not prepared to go into details, I don't know them -- but there were links which continued right through 'til the end, really. But I don't, certainly on the embassy side in those days, we did not regard SAVAK as a ... the dangerous, sort of monster it became in later

years. I mean, one wanted some sort of discipline and order in the country and I think -- I think, I can't be certain -- but I think our general feeling was that it's a good thing to have some power which is going to suppress, there was a c Communist Party, you remember, that Bakhtiar uncovered and I think it was a genuine plot, it wasn't a cooked-up job at all. And one welcomed that sort of thing.

Q. Well, what was the background to your becoming ambassador to Iran...

A. I don't quite know.

Q. In 1963.

A. '63. I was in the area, I had gone to Ethiopia. I knew I wasn't going to be there long. I'd asked to go to Ethiopia, or to Katmandu or Kabul, I liked those remote posts and I didn't want to get pushed off to Paris or Washington where I was likely to go as economic minister. I know those were the jobs I was meant to be... So I took steps to go to Addis Ababa, but was told I wouldn't be there very long.

And then I was called back to London rather hurriedly to take over African affairs temporarily in place of Roger Stevens, who been moved to some other job. But was told when I got this telegram, I think in August 1962, in Addis Ababa that the intention was to send me to Tehran the following spring when Harrison retired.

What were the motives? I mean I think the fact was that I had made a certain name for myself in Iran that first time, that I got on well with the Shah despite that early contretemps as evidenced at this farewell dinner he gave to me. Then I got dealings with him, I mentioned his dealings with the Russians, you see. And he did tell a member of the embassy staff (I've got the letter somewhere here) in 1962 when he was reflecting about his dealings with the Russians, he said that it was my intervention that had switched him. And he said something about that he had complete faith in my integrity or something. And I think things like that may have persuaded the Foreign Office that Tehran was a place to send me. Although when a new member of my staff came out to Addis Ababa, just before I left, he told me I was going to Turkey. So I started brushing up my Turkish. Anyway, it was Tehran, much to my delight.

Q. Which officer of the Foreign Office would actually initiate a new ambassador?

A. It would probably, at that level, I think -- see, Tehran is one of our major posts -- it would start probably at the head of the personnel department or it might even be the permanent undersecretary. You can't tell, I mean, it's an awful lot of luck, you know.

Q. It doesn't go from the Iran desk, for instance?

A. No, no. It wouldn't be from there, not at all. No, it would come from the personnel side, I expect. I don't know who was permanent undersecretary. Harold Catcher was, though he wasn't a particular friend of mine. But I'd never said I wanted to go to Iran as ambassador. I mean I just left it to fate to send me wherever they wanted to send me. We hadn't gotten any children, so it didn't really matter.

Q. So, how did you prepare for your...

A. Well, I came back, you see, to stand in for Roger Stevens on African affairs. His job, which was to act

as Number 2 to Rad(?) Butler, Lord Butler, on Rhodesia came to an end much quicker than he expected. So he wanted to come back to his job in the Foreign Office. So there I was, hurriedly brought back from Addis Ababa and after a month, been told that my job had come to an end, Roger Stevens'. So, I was then asked whether I would go to United Nations as the representative on the colonial side in place of Lord Carrington, who wasn't Lord Carrington then, he was Sir Neil Foote(?), who had resigned in disgust at the Conservative Party's policies, I think, over Rhodesia. And any time I refused a job, I really refused it. I said, "No, I won't go, because you told me I'm going to Iran in the spring. If I go to the United Nations, obviously I should be kept there, and that's that."

So I refused. So he said, "What do you want to do, well, in the meantime?" "Anyway, send me to the School of Oriental and African Studies to do a crash course in Persian." So that's what I did, I went off and because I'd never, although I'd had lessons in Persian the first time I was there, I hadn't done really much. So I went off and saw Nancy Lambton. I told her that I was too much in awe of her to, I'd be frightened but could she give me someone, so she gave me one of her

Persian staff, Haidari. So I did a crash course, I mean I knew it was too late in life to become a fluent scholar, but at least, I said "I want to be able to speak and to read newspapers." And really, I got that far, so it was a very useful interlude, really.

Q. How long did that take?

A. Well, I was there, I suppose, from December through until April or March. I had about four months of it.

Q. That's very good.

A. I worked at it every day, you see. So it was a very useful thing, because by the time I'd been in Iran a year or two, I had continued lessons and I could go 'round the country and talk to governors without interpreters and that sort of thing. I could make the simple speeches and so on, but I've never become, or intend to be a scholar in Persian.

Q. So when did you go back? And this time, how did you try to bring yourself up to date as to what had happened in Iran?

A. Well, I spent time in the Foreign Office reading through back papers. I saw every possible person I could and of course, I'd learnt a lot in my first time in Iran. So I went back in April 1963, just after the plebiscite the Shah had that year; he launched his six-point reform program and he...

Q. What was the impression in London about this reform program at the time?

A. I think probably pretty skeptical at the time, I think. I quoted from my first impression of the Shah and I think we were all very skeptical and had no high opinion of the Shah. It wasn't until really the end of the year, or the next year things seemed to look better, the Shah. And in fact, the turning point, in my judgment, was the Muharram riots of 1963, June when the Shah clamped down pretty hard on the mullahs. A good many people were killed, I mean there are all sorts of ideas of how many people were killed. I looked up, just two days ago in the Foreign Office, my dispatch at the time and I recorded about a hundred people; and I still stick to that figure, although many people, both British and Iranians, will tell you that hundreds, thousands were killed.

But I've got various reasons for sticking to that figure. One is that I was there and the amount of shooting that went on was not very great and it lasted, off and on, very spasmodically for I think three days. I can quote from -- my diary's there if you like. We were looking at Gholhak, we moved up freely, there was no question of not being able to move about freely. I was in Addis Ababa in 1960 when there was a revolt against the Emperor Haile Selassie, when there was a lot of shooting and even rockets and aircraft were used and then 500 people were killed. The amount of shooting that went on was minute compared with that.

And I also asked Alan, just after it was over, how many people and said 94. And he said he based that on the people who had gone for, reports of burials and people asked for pensions. And I asked him the same thing years later when he was no longer prime minister, just before I left, and he gave me the same figure.

And the last time I saw the Shah -- which was at Nassau, when I went out to see him in 1979 -- and we had a long talk about many things and I asked him how many and he said 110. I said, "Well, Mr. Alem told me

94 and I always maintained that it was that sort of figure, something about 100." And he thought for a few minutes and stuck to his figure of 110. And I still think that, because I notice in this report (I haven't got it here, I saw it in the Foreign Office two days ago) that although there was a certain amount of trouble in Qom, we got no reports in at the time -- and we had, in Qom I don't know, but in other places we had British consul people -- nobody reported to their bosses any sort of big slaughter of people and so on. I think the number of people killed was much smaller than has ever been... I don't know what you think about this, but...

Q. I don't have any...

A. But I've had big arguments with Iranians as well as others, and nobody has ever convinced me that it was anything like the sort of hundreds of people which one's been told. Anyway, I just give you that as an aside.

Q. Could you describe your arrival in Tehran as ambassador?

A. Well, I turned up there. There were various people to ... the Commonwealth ambassadors were on the platform, on the asphalt of the airport to meet me. And one English lady, Miss Palmer-Smith. Now Miss Palmer-Smith -- I had never heard about Miss Palmer-Smith -- she's one of the characters who in the imagination of many Iranians is a major British spy. Miss Palmer-Smith originally went out to Iran as the governess to Sir Clyde, what was his name, somebody Clyde who was a British ambassador there in 1926 or something. And she went as governess to the daughter of this ambassador, or minister he was, and instead of leaving when the Clydes left, she stayed on and became governess in the Qavam family in Shiraz. And as you know, one of the Qavams, Malektaq Qavam married Assadollah Alam. And she continued, after the Qavam children had grown up, to teach English in Tehran. I think she was helped financially by the Qavam family, she had no money of her own. And she taught a great many Iranians, from Dr. Eghbal, Ebtehaj downwards, English and became full of her own self-importance but was a harmless old girl.

Well, when I was due to come out as ambassador, she told the British charge d'affairs, Horace Phillips,

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that she wanted to be on the asphalt at the airport to
meet me.



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DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDGHY
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

NARRATOR: DENIS WRIGHT

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PLACE OF INTERVIEW: HADDENHAM, ENGLAND

INTERVIEWER: HABIB LADJEVARDI

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WHITE REVOLUTION

03

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 10, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape No. 3

A. Then Phillips told her that the only people on the asphalt would be the Commonwealth ambassadors and himself and the chef de protocol. Well, Miss Palmer-Smith never took no for an answer and so she immediately phoned up Mr. Jahanbani, who was the chef de protocol and one of her pupils, or his father, and demanded to be on the asphalt. So sure enough, she was on the asphalt to meet me.

I quote this story because Palmer-Smith did have a lot of influence among the Iranians. She would sometimes telephone me and say that, "So and so, a British subject, is in prison for knocking down somebody and killing him and you must get him out." And I would say, "I'm not going to get him out,

he's in prison for having broken Iranian law." So she would then telephone to Mr. Alam or to Mrs. Alam or to Dr. Eghbal and have him out of prison. She could do what the British ambassador wouldn't do. She was that sort of woman.

Anyway, she also had, what had given her a sense of her great importance was Robert Clives' daughter, Moomi (?) (to) whom she had acted as tutor, married Geoffrey Harrison, who'd come back to Tehran as my predecessor as ambassador. So, she was always in and out of the embassy all through the Harrison period. I heard this from Mrs. Hilda Afer (?), just before I went out to Tehran, that "You'll find Palmer-Smith is running the embassy."

So I took fairly drastic steps after I arrived in Tehran and the first time -- she was always invited to all the big parties, because Alam was prime minister and Mrs. Alam was her close friend. And so there was Gen. DeGaulle who came, I think, and she demanded she should be taken in the ambassadorial Rolls to the evening reception. I said, "Very sorry, you must go in a taxi or something else." And after one or two things like that, putting my foot down, I had Palmer-Smith in her place, I had no more trouble with her. But she was firmly believed by many Iranians to be sort of a secret agent. In fact, she had absolutely no political sense

whatsoever, and insofar as she ever gave me any information (maybe once or twice she came in), it was always wrong. She was just, you know, one left her to her good work. She did a lot on hospitals and things like that and was very good extracting money from people like Dr. Eghbal for her charities, you see. But that's Palmer-Smith.

I wrote a little obituary about her when she died, in The Times. Eventually we had to bail her out, because she was a great spendthrift, she never kept any money. In the end she got very ill and we flew her home to England and put her in a nursing home in Sussex. And paid for her, a number of us, I mean the British subscribed and we paid for her until she died. And there she is. Anyway I did a little piece in The Times about her when she died.

Q. So, when was the first time you saw the Shah.

A. Well, I saw him a few days later to present credentials. He took me aside for his, you know, the usual little tete-a-tete conversation. He didn't mention the last time I'd seen him, which was over the Russian deal. He made out the last time he'd seen me was when I was in Tehran in 1955, implying that, "Don't you ever talk to me about that Russian deal," so we never talked about it, ever. But it was a

friendly talk and I saw him from time to time, but nothing like as regularly as rumor had it.

When my successor, Peter Rambotham, went out, he had the impression I was seeing the Shah every week. I said, "No, I sometimes go three months, I don't see him." Aram, the foreign minister, who was an honest little man, but a rather weak man and was frightened of the Shah -- he was very much a self-made man, as you know -- he urged me to see the Shah regularly, every week. I said, "No, I'm not going to." I didn't want to get caught up with the Shah. And I never did, I mean I saw him when I had business; if I had anything which I could do through Alam or the prime minister or the foreign minister, I did it. I didn't want to get caught up with the Shah.

Q. What do you mean by "caught up," what were you afraid of?

A. Well, ???, you get caught up with, first of all, you get into the Court circle, which I didn't want to get involved in anyway, because I had the lowest opinion of Princess Ashraf and all the rest of them. I didn't want to feel that I was always at the Shah's beck and call, and you know, he would make increasing use of one, it wouldn't do me any good with my relations with the, you might say, the Iranian people. I

mean, one has an image to think of and I didn't want the embassy to be looked upon as being in the Shah's pocket. I mean, I took exactly the same line when I was in Addis Ababa. I wouldn't get myself caught up. I used to go riding with one of Haile Selassie's granddaughters, but apart from that, we kept them at arm's length. And that was my policy in Iran.

Q. And this was something that was at your discretion as ambassador...

A. Yes.

Q. The Foreign Office didn't have an opinion on it?

A. No. I mean they were quite happy with my relationship. You see I had a very healthy relationship with the Shah. I think it goes back to that early encounter with him and, as I told you, I had a confrontation with him over Horace Phillips and the American immunities in my second year. But I was always very careful not to upset him, because once you lost his goodwill, you were finished. If I had anything unpleasant to say, I used to either say, "I'm going to say something to Your Majesty you won't like," and he'd brace himself and say, "Well..." and I think I succeeded in not

really upsetting him.

A. It seems to me that the first sort of major event that took place after your arrival was the 15th of Khordad incident in Qom and the uprising. Is that correct?

A. Yes. It was, yes. And that, I may say, I thought at the time, and I still think, was the right decision by the Shah. Later, all right, the mullahs and so on became powerful, but that was for other reasons. At that time, and running through my reports back home after that, is that this was a turning point in terms of political stability, which Iran had never had. For that reason, over the next few years, one saw the Shah launching his reform program, carrying out a lot of what I considered good things for the country: raising the standard of living, improving morale, getting roads open. You know, all this sort of thing.

So I, although I had always a suspicion of the Shah, going right back to my early encounters with him, I had an increasing, let's say, respect for his leadership, and thought he had turned over a new leaf. Partly because he had got, (unclear), happily married and had children, which he always wanted, and a son and heir. And by-and-large he had a happy family life, although he went off at tangents with

other women. Nevertheless, on the whole he had a happy family life. And he was successful over his oil revenues. He got those increased all the time.

So, my later years were certainly ones where I thought the Shah was doing a good job, and should be supported by the British. But I was careful never -- I think I succeeded -- in becoming too identified with the Shah, personally. And certainly not with his royal family, his own family, whom I didn't think much of.

Q. Did you have any inkling of the event that preceded the riots?

A. The only thing -- in my last two despatches from Tehran I talked about troubles ahead. But I didn't anticipate any troubles from the mullahs or clergy. I saw it more from the students and intellectuals. But I didn't go into any ... I did a despatch, just before I left, on student troubles -- a long despatch on that. I indicated there was a great deal of dissatisfaction in the universities and so on.

And on my 60th birthday, the 23rd of March, 1971 -- this is part of the despatch on students -- I quote: "The White Revolution, having solved the immediate problem of Iran's

post-war society, has stimulated the expectations of the rising generation in a way which could bring a fundamental change to all the autocratic concepts on which even the White Revolution was founded. This challenge will almost certainly come in the Shah's lifetime, and possibly in the next few years."

And then, on the 20th of April, the day before I left Tehran for good, I wrote as follows (I was giving a general summary of my feelings about things): "However, despite the progress and prosperity of recent years, much criticism goes on. Student unrest has increased and poses a new problem as well as a warning that the future will be far less plain sailing." So, I saw things as disturbing, but certainly didn't -- and I don't think at that moment the clergy, the mullahs, were a danger. I think that developed subsequently as economic policies and other things

Q. There are people who consider the period when Amini became prime minister, just prior to Mr. Alam being appointed prime minister, as a sort of opportunity where power could have become less concentrated in the hands of the Shah and Iran could have become a little more democratic. But yet, at the time that you returned to Iran, if I am correct, Amini was in disgrace and most of the National Front leaders were

in prison at the time. I wonder how, at that time, you people looked at this situation, whether this was something that was regrettable or was in the nature of things?

A. I can't really remember. We certainly regarded Alam as just a stooge of the Shah. We didn't have any high regard for him as a prime minister, at all. Although we did give him credit for the firm line at the Muhamarram riots, and were glad he took the helm. No, I think we'd accepted the fact that the Shah was very much his own master, and that if he provided the leadership, as that quotation I read earlier this morning, I had great doubts about his leadership in those early days.

But, towards the end of that year, one saw him taking more and more under his own wing, and doing it rather well. But I think, as the years went by, one seemed to think, one felt, that he was taking on too much, he wouldn't delegate. And, in the end -- I haven't got any extract from it here, but I looked it up two days ago, in this final despatch of mine, I said that he'd got into a position where he was taking all the small decisions, all sorts of decisions, and no one man could cope with that. What one was frightened of was that he would do something silly because he just hadn't got the knowledge, and might resort to brinksmanship in a way which

would get him into serious trouble.

But one didn't anticipate the way things went, because one didn't know then that there was going to be this great increase in oil money in 1973-74, and the consequences of that, which, to my mind, led up to the final collapse.

Also, I left in April, '71, and I believe, with hindsight now, that '71 was a turning point in the Shah's own make-up. Although, as early as 1965 or '66, I was writing to London and saying that the Shah was increasingly reluctant to listen to anybody who criticised or suggested. Right on early, Alam had told me, "The Shah won't listen," and so on. By the time I left, this was very apparent. Even the Shahbanu carried no weight with him at all, according to Alam.

What happened in '71 -- this is not new to you -- were three things which I think profoundly affected the Shah. The first was his big success on the oil negotiations, in January and February. For the first time it was OPEC, really the Shah, who called the price at which oil should be sold. Big success.

The second thing was the Persepolis, Takht-i Jamshid celebration, 2500. All the world came and kowtowed and paid

lip-service to the Shah. That went to his head.

And then, thirdly, and most important of all, was the British pulling out of the Persian Gulf in November, and the fact that we and the Americans both agreed that the man to take the place of the British as the policeman in the Gulf was the Shah. And the subsequent Nixon-Kissinger decision to let the Shah have every sort of sophisticated weaponry he wanted.

I think all these things combined to make the Shah think he could do no wrong and he went on from one mistake to another, you see. I mean, changing the calendar, a bit later -- anything more stupid, can one imagine!

Q. I guess the point I was trying to find out was whether in 1963 you, as the British ambassador, or the British government, had any interest in trying to see Iran develop politically as well as economically and socially. What sort of a path did you see for this to take place?

A. I don't think we did. I think that we always hoped that it would work out towards some form of democratic government eventually. First of all, we weren't prepared to intervene. I never gave advice to the Shah on how he should run his country, his internal affairs. I think we were prepared to

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let him go his own pace, hoping that he would move in the right direction. He used to make soothing noises occasionally about democracy starting from the top down and all that sort of thing.

No, I don't know, I'm just speculating now, but I should think our own dismal experience with our own colonies on introducing the Westminster type of government taught us a lesson: don't try and force it down other people's throats. So, as far as we British were concerned, during my time as ambassador I never had any instructions or knew of any attempts by British politicians to push him towards taking a more democratic line.

Q. So basically you were looking at it; Iran has a ruler, the ruler is the Shah?

A. Yes.

Q. And if there is anything to be done, it will be done by him, and if we can influence him in conversation or in whatever means, we'll do it...

A. Yes, but not as a deliberate act of policy. We didn't go and talk to him about these things. I think we may at times,

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on the press side, have deplored the fact that there were no British correspondents of worthwhile papers. I remember Gordon Walker -- he wasn't in office then -- when he came out, he talked to the Shah about this, lamenting the fact that there was this control of expression, and so on.

I would occasionally tackle the Shah, or he would complain to me about the BBC or about The Times or The Economist. You know? I would say, "Well, why do you resent such criticism? You take the good and the bad, you come out plus, not minus, on all this." But I don't think I ever tried to urge him towards greater steps toward democracy or anything like that. It was too dangerous a subject to get onto with him.

Q. (unclear) when he was throwin' political opponents into prison, did you ever mention anything about those things?

A. The prisoners ...?

Q. Well, I mean mainly when the former National Front leaders were in prison, and Bazargan was in prison.

A. No, we got involved because Members of Parliament over here were writing to the press, and so on. And so we would

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be complained to by the minister of foreign affairs about interference in their affairs. Visiting British politicians may have talked to him. I wasn't with them. I personally, I don't think I ever intervened on any

Q. This would not be a subject that would be discussed between yourself and the Shah?

A. No. No. I don't think we ever talked about it.

Q. Now, many people have said that the uprising was really put down because of the courage of Mr. Alam, and that if the Shah had been there alone, without Alam, he wouldn't have had the courage to face up to the (unclear). Was this....?

A. Well, I don't know. Alam never told me himself, "I did this, that, and the other." But I've heard from others that he has said this. Knowing the Shah, I think it's probably so, that Alam was the man who really took the decisions, because, as you know, you know Alam, he wasn't a great intellectual, and so on, but he was a man of action. And this would be very loyal to the Shah, and he would see this as a very serious threat to his throne, as it was. And so, I would give him credit for it.

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Q. what were the main, major events or main concerns of yourself as ambassador during the period when Mr. Alim was still prime minister?

Q. I suppose oil was always an annual event in which, of course, the oil companies got involved, but sooner or later the embassies got involved. The Persian Gulf problems -- I think once Alim had me up to try and get me to agree to some sort of compromise or settlement on the Gulf. But it wasn't very serious. He had maps out showing the Persian claims to Abou Musa and Tunbs and so on, but it wasn't a very serious effort, and it was dropped.

Q. (unclear) they were interested in this?

A. Oh yes, there was one attempt by Alim. I've forgotten when it was, but that was dropped. It wasn't until 1968, when the British government announced that they were going to withdraw from the Persian Gulf, that this became an acute issue. Of course that took up -- most of my last few years in Tebran I was involved entirely with -- well, there was the oil side of it always -- but, the real negotiations I was involved with was the settlement of Bahrain and the islands.

Q. What else concerned you during Alim's tenure?

A. There were commercial problems. Persians weren't paying their debts. (?), who had built the Hilton Hotel -- just after I arrived, this happened. I've forgotten the details, but I know it got to a point where there was going to be "naming" the Iranian government or the Pahlavi Foundation in the City of London, which is as much as declaring that the country has defaulted on its debts.

I went to see Sharif-Emami, who was the head, I think, and Alem (was) prime minister. And I remember Alem telephoning me, and ;i said, "Look, unless we get our money by such-and-such a date, we are going to take steps in the City of London." Alem telephoned me: Would I put this off for 24 hours? I said, "No, we won't. We've put it off long enough." And we got our money in the end.

There were little things like that, relatively unimportant commercial things. I can't think of any other -- there weren't any big issues between us. Relations on the whole in those early days were very easy and satisfactory, apart from the oil. I can't remember the details of these oil negotiations that we had, but one sooner or later got dragged into them.

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Q. Do you remember the events or the causes that led to the dismissal of Alem as prime minister and the arrival of Hassan Ali Mansour on the scene?

A. Well, this was a great mystery; I think it came as a mystery to Alem, too. I'd been riding with him. I don't know if he'd seen the Shah, and seemed to think all was well. But there'd been rumors about him possibly going, and then suddenly it was announced on the radio that he was dismissed. I, to this day, don't know, nor I don't think Alem knew. Just the Shah had a hunch; he wanted Ali Mansour to take over. But who influenced him, I don't know. I never discovered. And I don't think Alem knew.

Q. But it came to you as somewhat of a surprise?

A. Very much a surprise -- very much. And a disappointment, too, because Alem had got into the seat. He was a good friend of mine; I liked him. And Ali Mansour I knew, but I never thought much of as a person.

Q. What was he like? I never met him.

A. Ali Mansour? A very "smooth" diplomat. He was an old-style Iranian in many ways. When, for instance, he went

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to Rome, as consul or in the embassy or something, he found himself totally incapable of settling into Italian life. Rome -- one of the plum jobs to have -- and he was unable to adjust himself. He was really 100% Iranian, I think, in some ways.

This is Ali Mansour, the senior?

A. No, the junior. Yes, he was very curious. You would have thought he was a westernized Iranian, but he wasn't. At bottom, he was very much an old-style Iranian. When he became prime minister, he used to summon me up to see him on the stupidest things, and then announce in the press that the British ambassador had been to see him. And he was getting, he thought, kudos for himself with the Shah by hobnobbing with the British ambassador.

I remember on one occasion when he asked me to go up and see him, it was to tell me he had given instructions for a large order for some Leyland trucks or something, or buses, to be bought. I hadn't intervened on this at all. I hadn't talked to any Persian minister about this, but he wanted me to think: "I, Mansour, did this for the British."

He was very much the old-style ambassador, who made use of

both the American ambassador and myself, to enhance his own esteem of himself. He thought this did him good with Iranians, which I don't think it did, but there we are. I never thought he was much good, and could never understand why the Shah appointed him and had so much faith in him.

Q. It was said at the time that he was sort of imposed on the Shah by the Americans.

A. Yes, well, he used to hobnob a lot with whoever the American minister was there. And he liked to let it be known he was close to the Americans, but I doubt whether the Americans. I don't know -- I never heard that they pushed him in, but they may have suggested to the Shah, put words into the Shah, you know, he was the right man. The Americans, probably, regarded Alem as too much of an Anglophile.

Q. And the arrival of Mansour on the scene was sort of a turning point in that, from then on, most of the cabinet was made up of younger and mainly, I would say, American-educated, technocrats, as they were then called, than the older type of political figures. How did that strike you at the time?

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A. There was no feeling, except in my mind, that this was a pro-American government. We never felt that. We always regarded ourselves as a junior partner in Iran, and there was no feeling on my part, and I don't think on the British government's part, that we were being pushed aside just because Alem had gone. And of course Alem showed no particular favor to the British when he was in the prime ministership.

But it was Mansour as a personality that I always regarded as a weak character. I disagreed with my own councilor, Horace Phillips, who had a high regard for Mansour, which I could never understand. It struck me that he was -- Horace wasn't always awfully good at judging people, I think.

At any rate, no, I think we were quite glad to see some young technocrats, who struck us as being a much better bet for Iran than having a lot of these old fuddy-duddies who had been in the government in the past. I can't think of any particular names, but there were a number of people.... Of course, Alem had one or two, pretty odd characters, in his.... Who was his ...? Members of the Tudeh Party, and so on.

Q. Baheri at one moment.

Alam was a very bad judge of character, I always thought. He had some terrible friends. I like to think I was one of his better friends. You know, he had some terrible Persian friends. What was that man's name? Motaghi, you know who I mean? One only had to look at the man to see he was a crook.

Q. That would assume that you thought Mr. Alam himself was above any corrupt practices.

A. Well, I didn't necessarily think he was above it. Although I knew he was well-off in his own right. Many people, both when I was there and, more particularly, since the revolution, have alleged he was extremely corrupt, and so on. But, as far as I was concerned, he never once hinted at any financial assistance for anything he did. He never asked me any real favors, even when he was prime minister. His daughter was expelled from Cambridge, and he didn't ask me to intervene to get her She left and went off to Philadelphia.

The only favor he ever asked me was: he had an English girl-friend, a British Airways hostess, I think, and he invited her family, her mother and father, out at his

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expenses. He asked me whether I would invite them to the Queen's Birthday Party (unclear). The only favor he ever asked.

No, I think from a British point of view, from my point of view, he was an amusing friend. His anecdotes about his life in Birjand and so on were fascinating. He was absolutely invaluable as being a direct link with the Shah, because sometimes one couldn't trust either the Persian prime minister or foreign minister -- and they were always at daggers drawn. Both Zahedi or Hoveida, they knew I could get at the Shah direct. And I used to do that if necessary. I would be careful to tell the other two, but one was playing an almost Byzantine game in Iran much of the time.

But Alam was invaluable, because I could know that he would report honestly to the Shah what I'd say. And I could always see the Shah through him, so that's why I shall always be grateful to Alam. But, whether the allegations about his corruption are true, I don't know. But one's heard a lot of stories about them, and they may or may not be true. But he did get involved in that Kish Island development. And he had some pretty nasty friends, and so, you know, one just hopes it's not true.

Q. I guess the next major event was the assassination of Hassan Ali Mansour. I guess that the facts, as they are known, say that he was assassinated by remnants of the Fedai'an Islam. But, again, like the Razmara assassination, there are these Persian rumors that the Shah had something to do with it, because he ...

A. Wanted to get rid of him, yea. Yes, I'd heard that at the time, that he was fed up with Mansour. I thought that was totally untrue, myself. There are fanatics in every country, sometimes just madmen. I've always believed that it was a Fedai'an sort of move, but I don't think the Shah would have resorted to that sort of thing. He could have always dismissed him if he wanted to get rid of him.

And choosing Hoveida was a risky business, in his place, because Hoveida, after all, came from a Baha'i background. And I remember Alam telling me when Hoveyda was appointed, he said, "I think the Shah's going to have trouble, because when anything goes wrong, he's going to be reminded that his prime minister is a Baha'i." Well, he wasn't a Baha'i, he was an agnostic, but he'd got this background.

And so the Shah took quite a risk in appointing Hoveida. If he had planned the assassination of Mansour, I don't think he

would have thought ahead to appoint Hoveida. I think he would have been grooming somebody up who would be more acceptable to the people.

Q. Well, I guess then we're at a time when Hoveida became prime minister. What in particular do you recall during his early years?

A. Well, I had certain reservations about Hoveida, because he'd been at the National Iranian Oil Company before that. And he had got very worked up when a new refinery manager was appointed by the oil consortium. I think they appointed a Dutchman, and Hoveida showed very strong nationalistic feelings. He felt that an Iranian ought to have been appointed. Rightly or wrongly, it doesn't matter. But he took an extreme -- I remember the then head of the consortium, I think it was John Warder, being very worried about the outburst he had from Hoveida.

I always got on well with him. He was an amusing character, very well-read, highly civilized, a sort of cynic, in a way. But I don't think he had any particular love of the British. He had a biting tongue, and I always treated him with a certain amount of reserve. I think he was much more wedded towards the French and the Belgians -- he'd been brought up

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there -- and was not particularly fond of the British.

But, having said that, I admired his ability. And I found him, as it seemed, to be reasonably straight to deal with on problems like oil and so on. I didn't have any dealings with him over the Persian Gulf. That was all handled with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or with the Shah direct. My dealings with him were almost always over oil, when it got to a crisis.

And over such things as a cemetery for the Protestant Community. I was sort of honorary president of the Protestant Cemetery Committee. We had a lot of trouble with the Iranian authorities, because they objected to burials in the old cemetery, which had been originally outside the city boundary, but was now at a place called Akbarabad on the way to the airport, and was surrounded by houses. And the Muslim population there objected to Christian burials.

We had a lot of trouble getting a new cemetery, but Hoveida was very helpful on that. Through him and his mayor, Nikpay, we eventually got a cemetery outside Ray, near the new Muslim cemetery, too. And for that, as I say, I was extremely grateful to Hoveida.

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But I can't say that I had any very close rapport with him, because I didn't. I thought he was honest. I never had any suspicion that he was corrupt in any way. Except by power. He got corrupted by power, in the end.

And the last time I was in Iran, in 1977, April, he gave a lunch for me. And I was really rather shocked by his behavior. I had a feeling that power had gone to his head and he felt that he could do no wrong. He wouldn't book any sort of criticism at all or hear anything critical about the country. And he loved making helicopters available to his friends when they came out and, you know, dispensing largesse in that sort of way to show how important he was.

I remember coming away from that lunch with a friend of mine, an Englishman, and both of us said, "Power has gone to his head."

Q. What did he do during the lunch that ...?

A. I don't know. The way he behaved generally. It's awfully difficult to say, but a grand manner. The nice, modest man seemed to have been turned into a rather arrogant person at the end.

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Q. While he was prime minister, did you have much dealing with him?

A. Well, a certain amount, over oil, in particular. Also, over the small matter of the Protestant Cemetery. But also, I remember one of the first occasions he summoned me was over some article in The Times which said the Shah "rules as well as reigns," and the Shah had told him to tell me this was untrue and complain.

So I remember saying to Hoveida, "Well, isn't this true?" And, of course, Hoveida didn't answer that. He was not a man you could answer back.

What else did I have dealings with him on? I've forgotten now. There was some other (occasion that) passed through my mind where I had dealings with him. I can't remember them now, no. Nothing stands out particularly in my dealings with him.

Q. There's something that had occurred which has been quite significant in many people's minds, I think a few months after your arrival in Iran. That was a meeting that apparently had been arranged by Mr. Aia and Entezam to sort of discuss some of the national issues and the way the Shah

was reacting to them, which subsequently led to their discharge from their various positions. Were you in Iran when this happened?

A. Yes, I was, yes.

Q. What version did you hear?

A. Well, the version I heard was that these two, Ala and Entezam, and some other elder statesmen, decided, after the Muharram Riots, that things were going too fast. And they urged someone to speak to the Shah and urge him to go a bit more slowly. And I think Ala, as the oldest member of the group, went to the Shah and said, "Look, we're loyal supporters of yours, but we do think you should go a bit more carefully, particularly on land reform." The Shah was furious and dismissed them both, immediately.

The Shah did mention this to me, some time later, as much as to say, "These men dared to criticise what I am doing. I'm not going to be told what to do." He did have an outburst to me on this very question. It struck me then that the Shah had no loyalty to old friends, and because they had crossed his path on this, he had just dismissed them.

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Ale really died of a broken heart afterwards. He went to bed -- the last time I saw him, he was in bed, dying. Shortly after, he died. And the Shah sent no representative to the memorial service in the mosque, the big Masjed-e Jomeh. Indicative, I think, that the Shah had no feelings of human gratitude or compassion at all, for anybody. Ale had served him loyally for years and years and years.

And, of course, Entezam -- the story is, whether it's true or not -- that when he (the Shah) got into trouble in 1978 and summoned Entezam back from London, Entezam went to see him because he wanted to become prime minister or take part in the Council of Regency or whatever it was. He said to Entezam, "I haven't seen you for a long time." And Entezam replied, "Sixteen years, Your Majesty, and I've been here all the time."

And there again was a case of a man who was absolutely honest, who'd served the Shah nobly over the 1953-54 oil crisis, and so on, just put aside and dismissed, and not made use of.

Entezam's brother, Nasrollah, who had made a great reputation for himself in the United Nations, had been president of the Security Council, and had been on various international

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missions for the United Nations, was just put aside by the Shah. Never used again.

Masoud Ansari, the ambassador to Moscow, another outstanding man, in my judgment, from what one heard about him, was another man who was just ignored and put on one side by the Shah.

So, my feelings were that the Shah was incapable of making use of people who either had crossed his path or he thought might be, I suppose, a threat to his own power position.

I remember in one year -- I was Dean of the Diplomatic Corps my last two years in Iran -- in, I think it must have been 1970, various distinguished Iranians had died. One was Djam, who had been prime minister, the father of the chief-of-staff who fell out with the Shah. Another one was Qavam ol-Molk, and a third one was Senator Taghizadeh. All of whom had played a role in Persian history. All of whom at one stage or other had been good friends of the British.

And I wanted to put in my Nowrouz or October for the Shah's birthday speech, I've forgotten which, some reference to these patriots who had died. I didn't want to say they were friends of the British. All I wanted to say was that we

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mourned, with the Iranian nation, the death of these three patriots. I submitted the text to the minister of Court...

Q. Was that normal?

A. Yes, you normally do submit the text, because the Shah has to know what line to reply on. And he said, "No, this won't please the Shah." And so it had to be cut out.

And another instance I give of that sort of pettiness of the Shah, because it was pettiness. Over the settlement of the Bahrain question (which we shall, no doubt, be talking about), Senator Abbas Mas'oudi, the editor and publisher of Ettela'at, played a very helpful role in 1968. When it was all over, and I retired, I would tell people that Mas'oudi had been very helpful.

And when I went back to Iran -- I don't know whether it was 1975, or whenever I went back for my first visit -- I went to call on Mas'oudi, just for old times' sake. He said, "I hear you've been telling people that I played a helpful role in settling the Bahrain." And I said, "Yes, because you deserve some credit." He said, "Don't tell anybody. They don't like it up there." Meaning up at the palace. This was a measure of the Shah's petty jealousy of giving any credit to anybody

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except himself.

Q. It would seem to someone like me that when you, as the British ambassador, were observing the kind of behavior that you've been describing, particularly the firing of Ala and Entezam, that you would be concerned about the future of this regime. And that perhaps you would consider taking some measures to prevent it.

A. What measures could you possibly take? If you mentioned anybody's name to the Shah, as a good person, it was a kiss of death for that person. He would immediately think he was a British agent, and would have nothing to do with him. The Shah resented anything like that. You had to leave it to the Shah's own sense. When one comes down to analyze what could you do in that way to guide the Shah, the answer really was nothing, because he wouldn't take advice from outside, and would suspect anybody mentioned by the British.

E.g., the Americans had pushed for Amini to be prime minister. Time and again the Shah would fling in my face: "Your man." I said, "He has nothing to do with the British, at all." Then he would declare, "Well, you and the Americans, it's all the same." I mean, that sort of thing.

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He would never forgive the Americans, but blamed the British as such as the Americans, because his curious, suspicious mind probably thinks we were influencing the Americans, you see. That Amini was our candidate to be a strong prime minister. But the Americans probably had very good reason. Amini was a stronger man. But the Shah never forgave the Americans for that -- Kennedy, in particular.

Q. This is going to be one of the amazing things for Iranians to realize, that the British did not feel they were in a position to even give this kind of advice.

A. No, I wouldn't have dreamt of doing it, because one knew it would be counter-productive.

Q. So you sort of had to sail along with the ship and hope for the best?

A. Hope for the best. Well that's what it amounted to. As far as the internal thing was, as I said earlier, the Shah seemed to us, after the Muharram Riots and the establishment of some sort of authority, to be moving in the right direction. And those early years were successful years, by any count, I think. I would say that, if the Shah had died in 1971 or '72, before things started going wrong in '73-'74

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or after '75-'76, the Shah would go down in history as a great leader, who had done more for his country than anybody since Shah Abbas, probably.

I would still stick by that. The BBC asked me to do an obituary of the Shah, long before he died. I did say just that, that the Shah had done for his country what Churchill did for us in the war, what De Gaulle did for France. I think I would stand by that still -- until, I'd say, post-'73-'74, when things were going wrong, and he, I'd say, himself, had become a megalomaniac and wouldn't listen to anybody.

Q. Did you and your other colleagues ever discuss maybe doing something ... in concert, you and the American ambassador or someone else?

A. No. No. No. I don't think we ever thought it would be a wise thing to do, to intervene in that way. The only person I would have discussed it with would have been with the American, because no other ambassador cut any ice, except the Russian, to some extent.

I think, with all due modesty, I can say that the Americans, because of their power position, were in the position, and

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the British, because of this legacy of the 19th century, a sort of belief that we had great power, which in fact we didn't have. But (he) always saw the British hand somewhere. So I did have an influence. But I would never have dreamt of using it in that way.

Because, first of all, what do you do? You produce a man, whom you say is going to make a good prime minister. Then he doesn't succeed all the time, and you lose out, every time. At any rate, if you'd asked me to look around and pick a prime minister in the days when I was there, who would I put my finger on? Can you think of anybody who was outstanding?

Q. It wasn't so much picking a different man, than his style of ...

A. Government?

Q. ... running the government, as you (unclear) yourself, his insistence on deciding on details at random.

A. You could never get him to listen to you, if you even tried. I don't think it ever crossed my mind that it was my job to try and get him onto a different wavelength.

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You see, he was his own foreign minister. On the whole, he handled foreign affairs very well. He was on good terms with the Arabs, except the extremists like Libya. He was on good terms with the Israelis. Good terms with the Russians. And then he got on to good terms with the Chinese. What more could he do? He had the whole lot balancing.

And there was the West, frightened to say "Boo!" to him. When things started going wrong, I wasn't ambassador, so I don't know. But it seemed to me then something might have been said to him, to try and pull him up. But I don't think it would have been effective even if anybody had said anything to him.

Q. In 1965, April of '65, there was an attempt by a 22-year-old conscript in the Royal Guards to try to assassinate (the Shah). Do you remember that particular day?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. How you heard the news, and how you reacted?

A. Yes. I remember it very well, because it was just the end of the Baghdad Pact meeting, and we had our foreign secretary out there -- Michael Stewart was there. I think

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there was consternation, generally, at what would have happened if the Shah had been killed.

What was particularly noticeable was, a lot of the critics of the Shah, the old, liberal guard, some of whom used to come 'round to the embassy occasionally and complain about the Shah's policies, and so on, the relics of the old Anglophiles I told you we'd tried to get rid of. But there were some very good, loyal Iranians. And they all were dismayed by this. You suddenly found even the Shah's critics realizing that without him they would be lost. So that's my main recollection of that. There was no jubilation, saying, "What a pity he didn't go." None of that at all.

Q. (Was there any) worry about a wider conspiracy or a coup d'etat? That kind of thing?

A. No, I think it was again pretty quickly proved that it was a small -- like the murder of Ali Mansour -- it was a small group. And they were rounded up fairly quickly.

Q. It turned out that part of the blame was placed on a group of students that had been studying in England.

A. Yes, well, that was, of course, the Shah -- typical Shah,

you see. It must be the British, somehow, behind it. And he blamed, and said so publicly, they were students who were at Manchester or somewhere. Rather remote control. But that didn't affect our relations at the time. It was only later that the Shah brought that out, when he got more bitter about things, I think.

I don't think he ever actually accused the British of being behind the plot. Certainly at the time I never felt that. In fact, the guard who saved his life had been trained over here, by the British. He was at least grateful for that. He was the man who had the presence of mind to shoot down the man.

It was on British advice also, I think, after that, he got out someone from our security side to advise on security. It was a result of that, that he after that always worked up at Sadabad. He gave up the Marble Palace because the attempt was on him in the Marble Palace. And the British advice was he shouldn't ever work down in town, it was too vulnerable.

And so, there you have this extraordinary mixture: the Shah, on the one hand, sort of thinking "Manchester students" -- on the other hand turning to the British, "What do I do to protect myself?"

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Q. I suppose he was well enough to be able to, a couple of months later, to leave on a 9-day state visit to Moscow. My question was that, when he was taking such trips to the Eastern Block countries, what were your concerns, if any...?

A. I don't think much concern. Because we knew he had to play off the East versus the West. Balance a trip to America or to England against a trip to Moscow. We were more concerned when he got involved in armaments deals with the Russians, which he did in 1966 or '67 -- I've forgotten the year -- because the Americans wouldn't sell him at what he considered the right price some, I think it was Hawk missiles, and also the F-4 fighter, the Phantom fighter. He was so angry about that, he turned to the Russians and started negotiations, like he did in 1959.

But he was more careful. He used this as a blackmailing operation, and let us know he was doing this. Aram was the foreign minister, and Aram was always frightened to say much direct to the Shah. So what did he do? He summoned the American ambassador and myself, and asked us what we thought about this. We both took the line that this was a very unwise move. I mentioned earlier that, on one occasion, when I wasn't there, the American ambassador, Armin Meyer, talked

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about the Shah being "all chewed up" if he went ahead with this.

Well, what Aram used to do -- he'd then go and see the Shah and say, "I've been talking to the British ambassador, and he says you're very unwise to do this." And the Shah would say, "What the hell is it to do with the British ambassador?" But Aram didn't mind that -- he'd made his point, you see. He would always assume that, having made the point and having come from the British ambassador, this would have some effect on the Shah.

And likewise, he would quote the American ambassador, who was more directly concerned because it was American equipment. In the end, of course, the Americans climbed down. They reduced their price and they let him have the F-4s and he got his Hawks, too.

That sort of thing did worry us, if he was involved in a negotiation with the Russians on arms. But going to Russia and negotiating about a gas pipeline, and so on, or a steel-mill, did not worry us unduly. What worried us was the influx of Russians into the country. But the Shah was so self-confident. He said that he could cope with them and that SAVAK would deal with them, and so on.



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDCHI
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

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IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 10, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape no: 4

Q. In November of '65, 74 Members of the British Parliament and two Peers sent a signed protest against death and long jail-terms for the accused Iranian students. Did that involve you or get you in any kind of <difficulty>?

A. Yes, the Shah blew up steam, and I think there was some correspondence between me and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That sort of irritant was always there. Members of Parliament, a man called Stanley Newens was the main leader, a Labor Member of Parliament.... We had a good bit of trouble on that score. But it was, I'd say, an incident. It didn't really upset our relations with the Iranians for very long. The Shah: "Oh, it's the British again." You see. This sort of thing.

Q. The fact that the sentences of the two who were supposed to be executed were reduced, would that at all result from some of these protests?

A. I don't know. I don't think we ever took any credit for it. And I don't think that -- it may have helped, I think, but no more than that. We didn't regard this as a great victory for the British, or anything like that. These sorts of things were very embarrassing to me, just as some of the broadcasts of the Persian Service used to be embarrassing to me, because the Shah didn't always like it. Or what The Economist wrote.

But these are things you have to put up with when you have a hyper-sensitive monarch, you see. And have an Iranian embassy here under instructions to report every unfavorable thing and very rarely report the favorable things.

Q. Did you ever know or become familiar with the case of Ahmed Aramesh, who was a former minister of labor in the forties, but in 1966 was arrested and imprisoned for anti-regime statements that he had made. I think for a time, also, he was head of the Plan Organization and a great critic of Mr. Ebtehaj. He was also a brother-in-law of Mr.

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Sherif-Emami.

A. No, I don't even remember that. I certainly don't think I was ever involved in it.

G. In November of '66 Mr. Alem was moved from his position as chancellor of Pahlavi University in Shiraz into the Imperial Court as the minister of Court. I suppose, from what you've said, that that was a welcome move because, as you've described, it probably helped your communications.

A. Yes, I'm certain we welcomed it, although we got on perfectly well with the previous minister, who was Ghoda Nakha'i, who had been ambassador in London. He was an interesting character. He was a poet, I think, and also a Sufi. We had no problems with him, but we were certainly quite glad to see Alem back there. But it didn't really mean any great -- you know, I was not sending telegrams to London saying: "Three cheers -- Alem is back!" There was none of that at all.

Because Alem was always close to the Shah. He was in touch with me all the time, because every Friday we used to go riding. So, I could always get things to the Shah through him if I wanted to. But the fact that he was back in the

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Court, probably, I say probably, made things a little bit easier than Ghods Nakha'i, who we weren't so intimate with.

Q. In the same month, it was announced that the coronation would be held in October of the following year. From what I've heard from other people, the Queen's coronation was used as a model, or at least they tried to learn some lessons from that celebration. Were you at all involved in ...

A. No, not really. It was all done direct through their embassy in London, I think. But what the Shah did was to send Mehdi Sami'i, who I think then was governor of the Central Bank, to London to make contact with the Duke of Norfolk, who was in charge of the ceremonial, ex officio, and with the Lord Chamberlain, whoever he was then, Cobbold <?> I think his name was. The Lord Chamberlain's office and the Duke of Norfolk <were> responsible.

And Mehdi Sami'i went over. He was given the film of the coronation -- there was just one film made of it -- which he brought back to Tehran. Of course, this is only speculation now, but I imagine the Shah was somewhat shocked to find that the Archbishop of Canterbury played a leading role in the coronation, and put the crown on the Queen's head. Whereas, of course, the Shah crowned himself and then crowned the

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Empress.

What I'm told also happened was that the young Crown Prince was made to look at the film to see how well young Prince Charles behaved, so that this would be a model for his own excellent behavior. Although I believe he had a high temperature at the time -- at the coronation.

Of course the Shah was very anxious that the Queen should come, because, for all the Shah's suspicions of the British, the Queen, for him, was the big catch. And he wanted to have the Queen at the coronation. I got a note asking that the Queen should be invited. But it was too short notice. It was six months before. And the Queen's program was already filled up. And so we said, "We're very sorry. The Queen can't come."

If she'd been available, I would have recommended she should have come. But she wasn't available. And because of that, I think, I can't be certain, the Shah decided to make a no-heads-of-state. He couldn't get the Queen of England, therefore he wouldn't have anybody. So he had a few personal friends, like the Aga Khan, or the widow of the late Aga Khan, and personal friends. But he didn't ask any heads-of-state at all.

And it was a very happy occasion, that coronation. My only comment on it is, it's the first time, as far as I can remember There were two big dinners given. One was given by -- the Queen Mother, I think it was. Another one was given by the minister of Court at one of the palaces or other. And for the first time, the Iranians flew in from Paris lobsters and oysters and cheeses and wines. It ceased to be what I'd call an Iranian affair. They got all this French and European food, which struck me at the time as a great pity.

And, of course, as the years went by, this became a habit, and for the great Persepolis thing in 1971, everything was done by Maxim's, again. Awful pity, the Iranians not being happy enough with their own produce, and going mad on having stuff in from Europe.

I might also say about the 1971 thing, that then when I was asked that the Queen should come, I recommended that the Queen should not come. For two reasons: first of all, twice we'd been invited to ask the Queen, and then it had been postponed. And the third time, we were going through a very difficult patch over the Persian Gulf, and were attacked in the press and all this sort of thing, and it seemed to me

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that: why should we, having all this abuse hurled at us in the press, bring our Queen out just to please the Shah?

So I recommended -- I knew I wouldn't be there, I was retiring -- but I said to my senior staff that I recommended the Queen should not come. I'm very glad to say, in the light of history, that she didn't come. We were consistent. The Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Anne came.

Q. I've heard, too, that there was a very close and personal relationship between Queen Elizabeth and the Shah -- beyond just the formalities. Is that ... ?

A. No. The Queen found him rather a bore. I wouldn't want this to be quoted until the year 2000: when I saw the Queen, before going to Iran, she'd been on a -- Queen Wilhelmina of Holland and Prince Bernard had had a cruise to celebrate, I don't know, 25 years on the throne, or something or other, and the Queen had been paired off with the Shah. And she told me she'd found him very heavy going. He would ask her such things as: "Now, your last Liberal Prime Minister was Mr. Gladstone, or was it Mr. Bonner Lloyd?" That sort of thing. And she found him very heavy going.

And then I know when the Shah came over and stayed at Windsor

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Castle -- after I'd retired, in 1975 or whenever -- well, it wasn't so much the Shah, then, but again I think she found the Shah heavy going, and his entourage she found almost impossible people, not very attractive characters, he'd brought with him.

So, no, the answer is that the Queen was not greatly enamored of the Shah.

Q. In January of '67, Mr. Aram and Mr. Ardeshir Zahedi switched places, Aram becoming ambassador in London, and Zahedi becoming foreign minister. How did this affect you personally and <unclear>?

A. Well, it affected things rather adversely, because I got on very well with Aram, liked him. He was a very honest and decent man to deal with, and very straight. Zahedi had been a great social success in London, a great one with the women, just like his father was. The number of women he put on their backs in London is probably very large indeed. But he was very nationalistic, and he also made it quite clear that he was foreign minister, and was not going to allow his past connections . . .

And although I never addressed him as Ardeshir in any notes,

the American ambassador, Armin Mayer, wrote to him shortly after his appointment, and sent a letter to him: "Dear Ardeshir." And he sent it back. He said, "I am the foreign minister." That was the sort of thing.

As the years went by, we had problems over Bahrain, and so on. And Zahedi was intensely nationalistic and very difficult, as I will When I talk about Bahrain, I'll say how the Shah cut him out of the negotiations, although he was foreign minister.

Then there was an occasion -- at the time of the earthquake in Eastern Iran, I've forgotten what year that was, '68 was it? It was at Ferdows, in that area. And there was a lot of destruction. And I used to have every autumn a party for the British Association -- it was mostly businessmen -- which we've held up at Gholhak. After the Queen's Birthday Party, it was our most important party. I was going to launch an appeal for help from the British community, for the earthquake.

We were living in Gholhak, and Zahedi's secretary telephoned to ask that, after we'd shut the office up, I should go and see him, at 6 o'clock that evening. The secretary said I would be host at this party, and so they telephoned to me and

asked me to go. I said, "No, I'll come tomorrow morning. I can't, I've got this big <party>." I explained I was making an appeal for earthquake funds, and so on.

Well, Zahedi was so furious about this, that I had dared say I wouldn't go, that he declared me personae non gratae. He wrote to the Persian ambassador in London, Aram, to say he was to tell the Foreign Office that as far as he was concerned, I was personae non gratae. He went off a few days later, I think to the United Nations or something, it must have been September, to the General Assembly.

I wanted to get in touch with the Foreign Office, the minister of foreign affairs, in Tehran, on some business, and nobody would see me. So, after about three or four days, I got hold of the chef de protocol. And I said, "Look, I've got some extremely important business <it was about Bahrain or something>, and I must see someone."

Well, Afshar was in charge. He had had instructions that nobody was to receive me. So he telegraphed to the Shah, who was down in Shiraz, to say had he permission to receive me? The Shah knew nothing about this. This was Zahedi only. And he turned to Alam, who was with him, and said, "What's all this about your friend, Denis Wright?" And I hadn't said

anything to anybody; my conscience was clear. And Alam said he knew nothing about it. "Well," he said, "Find out."

So Alam came back to Tehran and got hold of me, and what was all this? I told him the story. And it so happened that Arem had also come out on leave, I think, from London, and was instructed by the Shah to make a full inquiry into this. So I gave him the whole story. In fact, I gave him a copy of my despatch to London. I said, "There's nothing secret in this. You can see it." And, of course, in the end Zahedi was told not to be so stupid. That was the sort of thing that Zahedi used to do.

And a further incident: there was a man, Abbas Nayeri, who lived at Galunderak, his wife had property there. There was a party given by Abbas Nayeri for Zahedi's honor. He made certain that the British ambassador and the American ambassador, all were there. Well, it had to be postponed, because Zahedi said he wouldn't go anywhere where the British ambassador was going to be. So, I was away, up in Azerbaijan or somewhere, so Abbas Nayeri quickly arranged the party when I was away, but asked Charles Reagan ^{<?>}, the charge d'affaires,

Zahedi, when he turned up, saw the British car there, with

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the flag on, because it had been given to the charge d'affaires while I was away, he turned straight 'round and left the party. And this was in his honor. It was extraordinary behavior. Nayeri has told me this. You can talk to him in Paris, he'll tell you the whole story.

This was typical of Zahedi. He was totally unpredictable and nationalistic, and . . . there you are. No, he was not a nice man to deal with, at all.

Q. Did you at all get involved in discussions or preliminary plans for the calling of elections for the constituent assembly to make amendments to the Constitution allowing the Shah to appoint the Empress as Regent?

A. No. That was after the attempt on his life.

Q. Yes, this was in 1977.

A. No. I could only think that -- we certainly welcomed this move -- but, as far as I remember, we were never consulted about it. But I may well have said to somebody like Sharif-Emami, or somebody like that, "It's very important that the succession should be clear, in case something happened to the Shah." That, I think, may well

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have been said by me to somebody like Sharif-Emami or someone. But certainly we weren't involved in any details, at all.

Of course, we were worried, if the Shah did die, and there was no provision for any succession, there would be sort of squabbles among all sorts of people.

Q. Having looked at Embassy documents of the late '40s, I noticed that on that occasion, when a Constituent Assembly was called, there were full and extensive consultations between the Shah and the ambassador, John Murray <?>, <unclear> before this was actually done. The step was not taken until both the British ambassador and the American ambassador had <unclear>.

A. Yes. No, I think the situation had changed entirely by the 1960s, and the Shah would never dream of talking to us about those sort of things.

Q. Not even to?

A. I don't think so. I can't recollect him talking about it at all. No.

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Q. In the same year, '67, former U.S. Vice-President Nixon came to Iran and conferred with the Shah. Were there any parties or any receptions ...?

A. Yes, I met him at a party at the American Embassy, but only just -- he was in the receiving line, one didn't have any talk with him at all. That was Armin Meyer, wasn't it, I think?

Q. That's right. Yes.

A. I'd say Armin Meyer always struck me as being rather jealous of my own position there, and didn't really confide in me at all.

And I think George Allen, you know, who had been quite a figure in Iran at the time of the occupation of Azerbaijan by the Russians, he came to Tehran, and wanted to meet various people -- the old gang: Madame Nasr ol-Molk and people like that. And Armin Meyer didn't know any of these people -- they weren't in touch with the American Embassy.

That's one occasion when Armin Meyer did ask me to go 'round and meet George Allen. Because all these names came trundling out, and I said, "Oh, yes, I saw them yesterday, or

the day before." And so Armin Meyer had to scratch his head and start inviting these people to meet George Allen. But that was about the only time, I might say, Armin Meyer ever asked any help from me, at all.

Q. Some of the people who worked for Armin Meyer have mentioned that he forbade them from having any direct contact with Iranian officials, because it would upset the Shah. And they were mentioning people who were actually ministers, not even to speak of people who were in the opposition camp. What was your policy and your practice at the British Embassy concerning contact with Iranians of various political persuasions?

A. Well, we believed in having as wide contact as possible, but not getting caught up with what I call the known opposition to the Shah. Who were they? I don't know. Although people who were critics of the Shah, like Ebtehaj, no, I used to go and play tennis with him.

And the Imperial Defense College used to come out every year -- you know, bring out a group of soldiers and sailors and civil servants. I used to give a dinner party, and I would invite people like Ebtehaj or -- who else was a known ...? -- Dr. Alavi, who was always very critical in those days.

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People who I knew would be critical of the Shah, I would invite them to come and meet these people. And I had no hesitation in having them to my house.

But I was really careful in contact with, say, Ali Amini, because of the Shah's known distrust of him, and so on. Entezam, I saw occasionally, but not very often.

But in terms of the real opposition, I made no attempt to get in touch with them. Because it would have done one no good, and made one's position with the Shah almost impossible.

Q. So it seems that you and the Americans were in almost the same situation, of sort of having isolated yourselves from
...

A. From the opposition?

Q. ... from the opposition, and from any sort of direct contact with public opinion other than the upper classes.

A. Well, what was the opposition? I mean, who do you get in touch with, you see? I liked to have, as I say, a broader collection of friends, and I had a lot of the older

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generation, whether it was people like Hassan Alevi, who had been a senator, or Mousseavi, who was later murdered. Arab Shaihani -- a lot of these old hands, who were, on the whole, you might say, Anglophiles, but were critical of the Shah. But not working hard against him. Those sort of people I did keep in regular touch with.

I likewise was very happy to have the British Council there, who were in touch with university circles, and that sort of thing.

But one has to bear in mind that in a country like Iran, the ambassador and his embassy are accredited to the Shah, and the government of the day. And if, given the conditions in Iran, the Shah -- jealous nature -- SAVAK reporting every move, if you were in touch with the real opposition -- who would it be: Shahpour Bakhtiar, or whoever it might be -- you would be destroying your own position with the Shah.

As I mentioned earlier, Ali Amini going to dinner at the American Embassy.... Armin Meyer was in trouble, quite serious trouble. And this could have happened to me, if I'd got involved with the wrong sort of people.

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So, you might say, it was almost deliberate policy not to get involved with the real opposition. My main function was to keep in touch with the Shah. And at that moment of time, there was no indication that there was any threat from the opposition to his own position. I mean, after the Muhamarram riots there was no serious threat to his position, all the time I was there.

Q. But then this would keep your own government in London not really fully informed as to what may be going on in a particular country.

A. Well, yes. Well, you've got to weigh up one against the other. I mean, do you want to keep on good terms with the Shah, do you want to continue to do your export trade, do you want to continue your oil imports from Iran -- all those sort of things which the Shah could cut off if he wanted to, if he felt you were working against him.

And so, I don't think it can be really an indictment against either the British or the American Embassy that we did not, as a matter of policy, set out to keep in touch with the opposition. I don't believe, in those days, the clergy, the mullahs, were an effective opposition. It's only much later they came back into the picture. And the extreme Left, the

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Tudeh, were mostly in prison, and so on.

So, I would agree with you that the British did not get involved with the opposition, but we didn't shut our eyes to complaints that we heard, nor were we entirely impervious to the fact that the Shah had got enemies, but there weren't very many in those early days.

Q. It is said that even the C.I.A. really limited its contacts with whatever opposition there was. Could the same thing be said about the ...?

A. I think, probably, yes. I think it could. For us, and, I think, the C.I.A., the important thing was to frustrate any Russian plans. Therefore we cooperated with SAVAK <unclear> on our main target being the Russians. And for that reason, if we, at the same time, got involved with the real opposition, and the Shah heard about it, as he would have done, it would have ruined any sort of cooperation with him. And destroyed our general position in Iran.

I think, even in the light of hindsight, we were right to behave as we did then.

Q. When one looks at the chronology of Iran, one of the

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interesting things that one notices is that in 1968, it was the first time that the Shah and the former Queen took their winter holidays in Europe. As of then, subsequently, this became an annual practice.

A. What, taking holidays in Europe?

Q. Yes. Rather than in Iran, which In a way, it reminds me of the celebration that you described -- the two parties where food had been imported from Europe rather than having Persian food. Does this recall any impressions or thoughts? This first European winter holiday?

A. No, I didn't realize it was his first. I thought he'd been going skiing there fairly regularly. Is that the first time he went skiing over there?

Q. It may be. I have a question mark next to this.

A. No, I think he had gone earlier than that. I don't know with Soraya, but When did he buy his house, the Suretta <?> house? He bought that -- when did I see him in Geneva? 1970, or at St. Moritz. Well, it may be that was the first time, but it didn't signify anything.

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Q. Now, in later years,

Q. Gradually, these winter holidays became an occasion for many private discussions, negotiations, which could take place in Switzerland rather than in Tehran. Do you recall anything in this regard?

A. Yes, well, the oil people always used to go and see him in St. Moritz. He was on particularly close terms with Sir Maurice Bridgeman <sp?>, the chairman of BP. Maurice Bridgeman used to go and see him there and give a general tour de raison about the oil situation.

And certainly on one occasion, if not two occasions, quite serious oil negotiations took place in St. Mortiz. David Steele <sp?> of BP went over and saw him.

I went to see the Shah in February, I think, 1970. But we can come on to that when we come to Bahrain -- I went to see him there. And I remember on that occasion -- or later, when I saw him somewhere when I was back in Tehran, he said that that had been a very successful, enjoyable occasion, unlike many of the people who came to pester him in St. Moritz.

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And I remember -- I had to spend one night at the big hotel there. What is it? The Suretta <?> -- whatever it is. The place was teeming with Iranians, not only the security people, but businessmen, all hanging around the Shah. It was absolutely, almost disgusting, to see this, how everybody was there to try and get something out of the Shah, you see. Or to show they were close to the Shah, and so on. I was just there one night, though.

Q. When did the groundwork for Bahrain begin?

A. Well, it began in November -- well, the decision by the British government to pull out of Aden, which was made, I think -- they said they would pull out by 1968 -- and they may have made the decision, the Labour government, a year or two before, I've forgotten.

Anyway, that put the Shah on notice that the British were losing their grip on the Middle East, and he got increasingly worried. Then, in November 1967, the Labour government of Harold Wilson sent out a minister of state, (?) Roberts, to reassure all the Gulf rulers, the Sheikdoms and the Shah, that the British government had decided not to pull out of the Persian Gulf, but to stay there for an indefinite period, so long as their presence was required to assure the

stability of the area. The British reason being, of course, oil.

Well, the Shah was very pleased to hear that. I don't think he altogether believed it, but he was pleased, and so were the Sheikhs. Less than two months later, January 1968, the same British government, Harold Wilson's, sent out the same minister, <?> Roberts, to tell the Gulf rulers, including the Shah, that the British had decided to pull out of the Gulf by 1971. The reasons I needn't go into, but they were tied up with domestic policies in England.

Now this came as a considerable shock to the rulers, and also, not perhaps so much to the Shah, who was more realistic, but he wasn't particularly happy with this. This led to all sorts of complications, because the first thing was: the British pull out of the Gulf and give up their treaties with these Gulf rulers. What do you leave in their place?

We were anxious to leave a viable group of Sheikhdoms, and by May of that year, 1968, had managed to persuade the Sheikhdoms -- a lot of hard work, because there were quarrels between the various sheikhs -- that they should consider a federation or a union with the seven Trucial Sheikhdoms, plus

Qatar and Bahrain. And an announcement was made from -- wherever it was -- Qatar about this.

Now this infuriated the Iranians and the Shah because they saw this as facing the Iranian government with a fait accompli of a federation in which Bahrain, which was claimed by Iran, and the islands of Tunbs and Abou Mussa would be under the federation of these sheikhs. And the Iranians would be faced with the alternatives of either accepting this and recognizing the sheikhs, and getting on to good terms with the Arabs -- but by so doing, they would be giving up their claims to Bahrain and the islands.

So there was a concerted press campaign in Tehran against the British and this diabolic British, colonial plan -- imperialism, all the rest of it.

All that summer, my job was to try and find some means whereby we could move towards a settlement of these outstanding problems. We talked in terms of a package deal: Bahrain versus the islands, and so on. But that was not practical from the British point of view in many ways, and wasn't acceptable to the Shah. And in the end, we got it down that we must settle Bahrain first.

Well, the Shah had said to me over many years that he wasn't interested in Bahrain. The pearls had run out, and the oil was running out: "So what's the good of it -- to me?" But he said, "I can't just give it up. I've got to have a face-saving formula." He said, "You've got to have a plebiscite or referendum, and if it goes against Iran (which he knew it would, because the majority of population were Arabs), I will accept that."

We said we could not have a plebiscite or referendum because there wasn't the machinery there, and it could open up very difficult problems for the ruler of Bahrain, who wouldn't accept a plebiscite. He said, "This is too difficult, politically, for me." I went up to see the Shah at the Caspian -- he was staying at Ramsar, in Princess Shams' villa, I think, in August, 1968. And he rejected this idea of any sort of compromise on Bahrain -- completely. He said, "A plebiscite or nothing. Well, we were stalemate then.

And it was later that year that Senator Me'soudi came to see me to talk about various possibilities. I suggested to him, because I'd had just a hint in one telegram from the Foreign Office, that we might be able to get the United Nations into the act, and they might test public opinion in Bahrain, and say that public opinion was in favor of independence, etc.,

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etc.

And so, I put this idea to Mas'oudi, not on instructions from the Foreign Office, it was myself, exploring, although I knew that the Foreign Office were not opposed to this. And Mas'oudi saw the Shah, I think the next day at some party, and telephoned me afterwards, and said, "Come and have tea with me." I went up, and he said, "I've talked to the Shah and he likes this idea."

So I then telegraphed to London that there seemed to be a possibility along these lines. Well, London said, "Well, all right. We'll try this. But it's a very delicate operation, because we don't trust the Iranians. The Iranians don't trust us. And the Bahrainis don't trust either of us. So we've got to have everything agreed, step by step."

And so, in the end, I got enough guidance to be able to go to the Shah. And I went to him, on the 24th of December, 1968, Christmas Eve, and said to him, "Look, I'm in touch with London. I hear that you are not opposed to a United Nations solution. This is how we see it being done. We ask the Secretary-General to send someone to test public opinion, and so on." "But," I said, "we've got to have agreement at every step. It's going to be a very difficult negotiation."

And the Shah said, "Yes, I like this idea." He used the word "constructive." But he said, "I must prepare public opinion." So, he said, "All right." I said, "Now, who can I deal with on this?" Because I knew Zahedi was deadly opposed to any settlement on Bahrain. He'd once in the Embassy had a great outburst when <?> Roberts was there, and said that "if we did anything with Bahrain, he would resign, and call for his sword and his gun, and go and fight for it." You see.

Q. Really?

A. Oh, yes -- a terrific outburst. So the Shah thought a minute, and then he said, "I think you'd better deal with Mr. Afshar, Khozrow Afshar. He is more in tune with this than anybody else." That was on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Day, 25th of December, Afshar summoned me to go and see him. I went, and told him what had transpired with the Shah. And that was that.

I'd told London all this. And I expected -- the Shah saying he'd have to prepare public opinion -- this would take several months. He went off to India on Christmas Day -- to

India and Pakistan on a state visit.

On the 4th of January, next day, I suppose, I must have picked up the paper, but I used to get Ettela'at or Kayhan in the Persian edition every evening, and I was reading it, and saw he had made a statement in Delhi about being prepared to listen to public opinion -- I've forgotten his exact words.

Q. "Shah said Iran wouldn't use force to make Bahrain part of Iran, but would also not allow it to be ceded to others."

A. Yes. But he also said that public opinion must be consulted, I think. So, as soon as I read this, I thought: "Ah, this is the Shah! He's suddenly taken the step." So I called up my councillor -- it was a Sunday, I think. And said, "Come over and talk." Because I normally never bothered people on a Sunday -- I left them alone. And I said, "Look, this is the Shah suddenly moving."

And, in fact, it was. He'd done this, I heard later, against the advice of his own advisors, but he took the plunge. Well, that set things going.

Q. Who was your councillor then?

A. Charles Reagan <sp?>.

And that set things going. Over the next few months I got various drafts of procedure, and how we should handle this. And I used to work through Afshar. I never said a word to Zahedi, not a word to Alam. Kept it absolutely

Q. Really, not even to Alam?

A. Not to Alam. I said nothing to anybody. I just kept absolutely with Afshar, and talked to nobody. We had problems. Afshar was quite difficult -- he said, "We must go to the Security Council first, before we go to the Secretary-General." And the Foreign Office absolutely refused. They said, "If we go to the Security Council, there will be trouble, and this will spoil the whole thing. We cannot." And we refused to budge on that.

And Afshar was very difficult on this, so in the end I went to the Shah, explained why, and the Shah accepted our view. So we got that point won.

What were the other areas? I've forgotten. It was over wording. But on the whole, between Afshar and myself, we

threashed out things. And occasionally I would say the Shah had to be brought in. But we got it to a point where everything was ready except the question of a plebiscite. The Shah still insisted on a plebiscite or referendum.

We knew that Bahrain would not accept this, so there again we had to I think I went to the Shah, but somebody else I think there were talks in Geneva, secret talks, with Afshar, who went to Geneva and talked to the Bahrainis there. And eventually, we worked out a formula that the United Nations should be asked to sound public opinion, as best they thought. And the Shah accepted this.

But we'd been rather suspicious of all this. We wanted a document which would set out how he would do this, who he would consult. The Shah wouldn't accept this. He said, "I'm not prepared to be tied down to anything. I've got to have <unclear>."

So we agreed in the end, with the Shah's agreement, that the British should have a bit of paper agreed with the United Nations, but the Shah should be unaware officially of this. And so that was agreed after a bit of a battle.

And I've forgotten what other issues there were. But all

seemed to be going well. We had no difficulty on agreeing who should be the man, a man called Winspear Ghiucetti <?>, his name was, I think. He was Italian, but he had been brought up in England. We had to keep that rather quiet, because we thought that would upset the Iranians. But he was Italian. And he'd got a good reputation at the United Nations.

We also had to persuade U Thant to do this, because this was an exercise which both the Shah and we knew was already -- we knew what the results would be, you see. But I think it was done at Eisenhower's funeral, when Alec -- no, it wasn't Alec Douglas-Hamilton, it must have been Michael Stewart, talked to U Thant, and explained the importance of this. And he undertook to take it on. And so, things went ahead.

And things looked like all being settled. The last hoop, or obstacle, was the wording of the Iranian approach to the United Nations. Now, at the last minute, sometime in December or January, 1968-69, the Iranians had second thoughts about the wording of this. And I wouldn't want you to quote me to Afshar, but he was the difficult person. He was by this time ambassador in London, but was still handling negotiations.

And for reasons which I can only guess -- I think chiefly he was thinking of his own skin vis-a-vis Zahedi, who was very opposed to all this sort of thing -- he wanted to have a nasty letter to the UN, talking about British colonial rule in Bahrain. We said, "This is not acceptable. First of all, it wasn't colonial rule, it was a different sort of relationship. And, secondly, this is not acceptable to the Bahrainis." He refused to budge.

I was on my last leave back here, and had just bought this house. And the Foreign Office called me up, and said, "Look, serious trouble over Bahrain. The Iranians have now back-pedaled on the approach to U Thant. What do we do about it?"

We knew fairly certainly that it was Afshar and not the Shah. I said, "Well, I think the thing is to get them <?> to send me to St. Moritz to see the Shah. I think that might do the trick." Well, it didn't. Our charge d'affaires, a man called Donald Murray, who was in charge, tried this on in Tehran, and it didn't work.

So I was instructed to go to see the Shah in St. Moritz. And I also said that it was essential that Afshar should be there, because we were pretty certain he was the obstacle.

So, I went to St. Moritz. I was in Brussels. I had to sit up all night; I couldn't get a sleeper. I had lunch with Afshar. It wasn't a very harmonious lunch, because Afshar was very tiresome and difficult on this. He'd been traveling all night too, I think. He'd been in Tehran for his father's or father-in-law's death or some ceremony -- fortieth day.

Then we went in to see the Shah. The Shah was in ski clothes, in a very happy, holiday mood. And he started asking me about what I'd been doing on my holiday, and all this sort of thing. And so we got on to quite a friendly ... I told him I'd just bought this house, and he told me he'd just bought the Suretta <?> house, which you could put this whole house in one room, almost.

There's old Afshar sitting like this, you see. (Do not quote me back to Afshar on this.) Then the Shah said, "What's your trouble?" So I said, "Look, it's this approach to U Thant. The wording is not what we had agreed, and it's so offensive that it's not acceptable to the British government." So he then talked to Afshar.

The Iranian from the United Nations had come over, too. And he seemed to tell them, "Well, yes, settle this, and go back

to New York and clear this up."

Well, I knew perfectly well that once it got out of the Shah's hands it would not get settled. So I said, "Your Majesty, after what you've said, I can settle this in the next room with Mr. Afshar in five minutes, if you'll let us talk." So, I could see Afshar ready to stab me then, you know.

So the Shah said, "All right. You go next door, and I'm here till seven o'clock." So I went next door with Afshar and this other man. And we had about two hours of talk. I had very good instructions from London. I was given a certain amount of leeway, and, in the end, after a lot of tough argument, I reached agreement. I said, "I accept on behalf of the British government."

He said, "Well, I'll now take it to the Shah." So Afshar goes in to see the Shah.

Q. Alone?

A. Alone, yes. And came back five minutes later, and said, "Yes, the Shah's very happy it's all agreed." Well, because I didn't trust Afshar, I said, "Would you read out exactly the

wording, so there's no misunderstanding between us."

So Afshar read out. And he'd put back all the things I had cut out.

I exploded, you see. I said, "This is not what I agreed."

"Oh," said Afshar, "this is what the Shah agreed." I said, "I don't care what the Shah has agreed. It's not what I have agreed. I'm negotiating on behalf of the British government." Can't alter it. The Shah has made up his mind, and that's that. I said, "I don't care a damn. I'll go and see the Shah myself. But I'm not going to accept this."

Well, after a really stand-up battle with Afshar, he went off to see the Shah again. And came back a few minutes later, and said, "He accepts your wording." So, because I didn't trust Afshar, I said, "All right, you get it typed out, and give me a copy. Then I'll accept it. I don't accept it til I've got a copy now, which I want to check word-by-word."

And so Afshar went off and got it typed. And in the end I accepted it. About nine o'clock that night, I telephoned to London, and said, "All is settled." And that was that.

And then we settled the Bahrain thing. I mean, it went ahead quite easily after that.

Q. How was this plebiscite question worked out?

A. Well, it was that he -- Winspear spent five or six weeks there -- he consulted various clubs and organizations, and went 'round. And reported that the overwhelming demand was for independence. And so, that was that.

Q. How did you react when all that protest was spoken in the Majles? Were you worried that it may ...

A. No. You see, the Shah -- he was a curious fellow -- because he knew Zahedi was against all this, he made Zahedi go down to the Majles and announce this, you know.

Q. I was there that day as a spectator.

A. Were you? And -- what's his name, Pezeshkpour? -- he attacked it, didn't he. Four people voted against it. No, once the Shah had decided. And he'd had a bit of a propaganda campaign in the army and things, you know. He was much more nervous than he need have been. I think that Bahrain thing could have been quite easily settled without

all this. I mean, the Shah could have given it up without any serious trouble. There wasn't much.

And the islands -- that was all settled after I left. But I got involved, of course, to some extent, on the islands before I left. But I believe that the Shah could have given up his claim to the islands, if he'd wanted to.

At any rate, we were much more concerned with Bahrain, so when I retired and left Tehran, I went down to the Gulf. I'd never been in the Gulf before; I was never allowed to go there when I was in Tehran -- the Foreign Office wouldn't let me go.

Q. Why not?

A. Well, because it would have been misunderstood by the Shah, misunderstood by the Arabs. You know, it was much better to keep out.

But when I went down after I retired, I of course went to see the rulers of Ras al-Khaimah and Sharjah, and urged them to come to terms with the Shah. I said, "He's going to take these islands, whether you like it or not. You might as well do a deal, and get what you can on the oil side, and all

that."

Well, one of them -- I think it was Ras al-Khaimah -- listened, and Sharjah didn't. And of course the Shah occupied the islands. But I wasn't there at the end.

But, on the whole, that Bahrain exercise was an indication of statesmanship by the Shah. And the fact that you could go to him and argue Whenever these problems cropped up with Afshar, one went to the Shah and gave him one's reasons for why we objected to going to the Security Council, and all that sort of thing. And the Shah took quite big decisions, courageous decisions, and showed himself to be, you know, a statesman, in a way. So that thing was settled, and quite a big feather in the Shah's cap.

Q. What did the Shah get in return for this? I mean, ...

A. Well, he got the islands.

Q. I see, that was the ...

A. Well, we wanted ... we never ... In fact, at one stage in the negotiations, in March of 1969, Alam (I'd never discussed this question with him, or with Hoveida, or with Zahedi) --

Alem said, "I have instructions from the Shah to tell you that any settlement of Bahrain is conditional on the islands being handed over." And I said, "Not a bit!" I said, "We've never had this as a package-deal idea. They're quite separate. The rulers are different. And, if you insist, the Bahrain negotiations are off."

And, when Michael Stewart, the foreign minister, came out, that May, for a Baghdad Pact meeting, the whole idea of linking them was dropped. I mean, the Shah tried it on just that once.

But, at the back of the British mind was that the Shah is determined to have these islands, and if we don't let him have them, we shall be really at war with him defending the Sheikdoms. And, you may remember, that when the government of Heath got in, after Labour lost the elections in -- when was it? June, 1970 -- I was summoned home to England to see Alec Douglas-Home to talk about this. Because the Conservatives were in two minds about the islands, and pulling out of the Gulf, generally.

And the first thing that Alec Douglas-Home wanted to do was to see the Shah to find out how strongly he felt about the islands. So I went across in a little chartered airplane with

him -- a government airplane -- in June, 1970, to Brussels, where the Shah was, to see him about the islands. And Douglas-Home was convinced from the line the Shah took that he would not give up this claim to these islands.

I remember him saying to me on the plane coming back, "I think we've got to take this on the chin." In other words, the Conservatives have got to be prepared to abandon their support for the Arabs on this, and let the Shah have them. And that's what happened you know.

Q. In '69 there was a good deal of conflict between Iran and Iraq, which resulted in Iran abrogating the 1937 Agreement on the Shatt-al-Arab. Does that have anything to do with any of these discussions? <unclear>

A. No, I think the Shah complained that we were not supporting him. Because there'd been trouble earlier about ships coming up the Shatt-el-Arab, and flying the Iranian flag, and that sort of thing.



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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDGH
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

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IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 10, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape no.: 5

A. But, on that, I can't remember any -- I mean, I must have talked about it to people, and I do remember, at one stage, Ardestir Zahedi, rather to my surprise, blowing up or getting quite angry about SAVAK's intervention in Iraqi relations, having spoilt better relations. But he didn't go into details about it. I can't remember being more than, you know, worried about it, but we certainly were not involved in any way, trying to act as peacemakers or anything like that.

G. Basically, as I understand it, SAVAK was the Iranian government agency that was sort of responsible for the Gulf and Sheikdoms. That never has been understood by me. Does that make sense to you?

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A. That does, yes. You see, SAVAK had responsibility and -- who was it? -- Alikhani, I think, was involved. Have you talked to him about this?

Q. Yes, we talked about this yesterday.

A. He was one of the SAVAK people involved, and that's, of course, why Persians distrust him -- Alikhani -- so much, because he was involved with SAVAK.

Q. What was the rationale for SAVAK being involved in foreign affairs? (unclear)

A. Well, I think because the Shah -- I don't know, I'm only speculating, now -- but SAVAK had secret funds, and the Shah envisaged buying the Sheikdoms. SAVAK used to invite the Sheiks over for hunting. I once complained to the Shah about the extent to which the Great Bustard was being slaughtered by the Sheiks who would come over with their Tommy-guns and kill hundreds of these very precious, rare birds, the Bustard. And then go off back to Qatar, or wherever it was, with these birds' carcasses all rotting on their boats, and that sort of thing.

This was all done through SAVAK. I think he felt that the

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SAVAK were the people to soften up the rulers and make them into good friends of Iran.

Q. What do you remember about your last two years, I guess it would be, in Iran?

A. Well, my last two years were so much taken up with Bahrain, really, and the Persian Gulf generally. And, of course, oil always. But those were the two main things.

I did a lot of traveling those years -- a good bit of traveling. My wife always and I did every year. We either went off in a Land-Rover or with tents or with a mule, and camped out and so on. We did quite a lot of that.

But the only time I was escorted on any of these trips was the last trip I did. I wanted to ride to the Caspian, to Daylam, where I had a Persian friend whose wife worked in the embassy. They had a small property there. And this meant coming down near Lahijan somewhere. And there'd been that guerilla attack, do you remember, on a police station?

Q. Siyahkal.

S. That's it.

Q. I see. You were there then?

A. Yes. I was there then. We'd planned this trip way ahead ... from somewhere near Qazvin to pick up mules and then ride over to the Caspian. It was April, and it was not very nice weather. And we were going to end up at this place, Siyahkal, you see.

Q. What was so special about Siyahkal? Why did you want to go there?

A. Because this man -- I was staying with a man called Alibouli (?), who had a property at Daylamian, which was above Siyahkal. And that's where the road came to an end, where motorcars could pick you up. And so we had to get there.

Well, because of this attack on the police station -- I had told the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I was going to do this trip. I always told them when I was going off. I never asked for permission, I just said. And in this case they said I must have an escort. So we had four soldiers on mules.

I remember the first night. It was snowing, you see. It was

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up in the mountains, and frightfully cold. These poor soldiers ... cold! My wife was so frozen that she had to be lifted off her horse when we got up to a village. Anyway, we had three days riding through. And then, of course, the other side you came into spring. But that's the only time of all my stay in Iran where I ever had what I'd call a military escort to protect me. Otherwise, one traveled freely without any trouble at all.

Q. There were rumors about air attacks against these guerillas. Did you see any airplanes flying by or anything?

A. No. No. None.

Q. What was your impression of that? Did you feel this was an isolated incident?

A. I thought at that time that it was an isolated incident. But of course it wasn't. It was the beginning of further guerilla attacks. I left a few weeks later. That trip was in April -- just let me see when we did this trip -- yes, Demash Amaliou Gillan, at the house of Javanbakht. This was a Kurdish village, which was a summer village. It was almost empty. And this was the 8th of April, 1971.

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Do you want this on the tape?

Q. Yes.

A. "Set off at 8:45 am in Land-Rover with Iona, Lev (that was a White Russian friend of mine, Lev (?), who was in Persia), and Teresa (Teresa was my wife's private secretary). Dropped Teresa in Qazvin, where she wanted to shop. We went on to Rudbar, where Allaboui (?) (who was our host there) was awaiting us with various cronies, one of them our host tonight.

"Good lunch at newly-built restaurant at Rudbar, then some forty miles by newish metalled road running to east. Two Russian jeep-loads of Gendarmerie escort (there's been shooting and killing at Siyahkal lately, so was quite glad of the escort). Stopped for tea, etc. after some two and a half hours, then on in thick mist to pick up mules, all laid on and waiting for us by Allaboui (?).

"Wet, misty, and very discouraging as we set off about 5:30 pm. Us three (that's Iona, myself, and Lev (?), Allaboui (?), Javanbakht, a fat, but very nice mining-engineer, two gendarme officers, and three or four men. Numerous c_h_e_r_v_a_d_a_x_s (that's muleteers, isn't it?). Mist, rain,

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sleet, and cold. And I wish we had never come, except for the primroses and violets and snowdrops.

"But now, 10:00 pm, warm, well-fed, and tired, in Javanbakht's family mansion, I've no regrets. He's the local squire, and the few all-the-year-round villagers in the y_a_y_l_a_q could not be more friendly. It seems this part of Gilan is peopled by Kurds who were transferred here from Khorassan by Nard-e Shah. Javanbakht is such a Kurd, and says the villagers all talk Kurdish."

Well, that was it -- I mean, that was our first day. And so we went on. On the next day, we stayed at Espali (?) and third day, the 10th of April, we got to Siyahkai, where the shooting was.

Q. It had happened, what, several days before?

A. No, it had been several weeks before, I think. I've mentioned nothing about it at all -- it was very late ... No, there's nothing about it.

Q. What percent of the day's diary would be written that evening and what percent would be done later on?

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A. I did that that night.

Q. But normally ...

A. I always wrote it up at night. And I'd say they're not of much interest, the diaries, because they give just factual things. I was very careful not to give views on people, and so on, because I always suspected that -- well, didn't suspect, but imagined that one or other of one's servants was supplied with a camera by SAVAK. I don't think they were, but, in fact, one had to be careful, so I never did.

Q. So you left Iran about a few weeks after this?

A. Yes, the 22d or so of April.

Q. Your term in Iran, if I remember correctly, must be one of the longest of

A. It's the longest on record, except for a man called Allison (sp?), who was there in the 1870s. He was there for a few months longer than I was. But it's the longest on record.

Q. Is there any special explanation for this?

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A. Well. I think the explanation is a mixture of luck and First of all, I know -- afterwards I was told there was a move to send me to Moscow as ambassador, after I'd been in Iran little more than a year and a half, in place of Geoffrey Harrison (?). Or was it of Humphrey Trevelyan (?)? At any rate, there was a move, but that was quashed by the Foreign Office on the grounds that I hadn't been in Tehran long enough.

Then, after I'd been there about my normal stint of two tours -- four years --

Q. Is four years the normal ...?

A. It's the normal sort of tour -- three and a half, four years. I had been asked what I wanted to do next, and I said, "Anyplace." I didn't particularly want to leave Tehran, but if I had to go anywhere, I would like India. I think I was slated to go to India. I never heard officially, but various hints were made.

But Harold Wilson suddenly decided to amalgamate the Foreign Office with the Commonwealth Relations Office, without any previous.... And a job had to be found for the head of the

Commonwealth Relations Office. And he was a man who had served in India and in Pakistan, and was obviously a choice for Delhi. So he went, and I didn't go. I say, it didn't worry me at all, I was very happy in Tehran.

And then, a year or two later, I got a letter from the Foreign Office to say that, [unclear] to their surprise they had been told by the Treasury or the Board of Trade that they would very much welcome me as the head of the OECD Delegation in Paris, and that if I wanted the job, it was mine, in place of Lord Henley (?), who was a man who nearly came to Tehran as ambassador in 1953-54. But if I wished to stay in Tehran, they would fully understand, and let me stay there.

So I said, "Please let me stay in Tehran." So, one of those things. And, I suppose, the fact was that I was getting on reasonably well with the Shah, and knew the country, and things were going fairly smoothly in Anglo-Persian relations. That meant they didn't want to change me.

Very often, you get businessmen coming back complaining about an ambassador. Or the oil companies -- they used to complain about Douglas MacArthur (?). But I was on good terms with the oil companies and good terms with the business world, because I always regarded it as my job to do what one could

to promote British business. I never took the line that an ambassador should be aloof from the business world, and so on.

So I had good friends among the community, and there was nobody gunning for me, as far as I know, so I stayed on.

Q. And then, once you came back to England, when was sort of the next serious contact, or business contact, with Iranian officials?

A. I had virtually none. Because I was asked, after my last leave in England, whether I would join the board of various companies. One was Shell, another one was Standard Chartered Bank -- it was then the Chartered Bank, it hadn't been amalgamated -- and the third one was (?) Cox, who were developing agro-industry in the south.

And I said I would, on condition I wasn't asked to promote their activities in Iran. I wasn't going to go out to Iran, and go and see the Shah or Alam, and try and do business with them. And they all agreed. They said, "No, we don't want you to do that. We want your advice."

So, I kept to that. The only time I went back on I'd say a

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business visit, I went with (?) Cox's to have a look at their development in the south, but no more than just to see that and take part in one meeting. I kept to that. I never was used by business people.

Once the Board of Trade, as it then was, asked me to go out and lead a group of British over to try and get the bidding for the Tehran Airport. And I refused to go. I said I wasn't going to go out and do any business in Iran.

Then one of the banks, Lazard's (?), I think, wanted me to go out and lead a consortium, and I refused. You know, I kept absolutely out of it. And I'm very glad I did, because I always had a contempt for these retired ambassadors and military attaches who used to come back and tout 'round for business. (It was) particularly Americans, who did it, but Germans did it rather badly too. And, you see, Douglas Mac Arthur's done it, or Helms has done it, and got tied up with Persia

And, of course, I had Persians trying to get me to go into business with them this end. And of course I refused. And no regrets.

Q. Maybe this is a good point to stop here today.



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDORI
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

NARRATOR: DENIS WRIGHT

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TAPE NO.: 6

RESTRICTIONS: SEE RELEASE

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 11, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape no.: 6

Q. Sir Denis, if we could continue today's session by asking you to describe your visit to Iran -- I believe it was in 1977? That was your first visit with your old friends and acquaintances?

A. No, I went back twice before that, after I retired. I went back two, even perhaps three, times. And I think I saw the Shah on every occasion. But the most interesting one was the return I made there in 1977, April.

I went out primarily to -- I was on my way back from the Far East -- but I was mainly concerned with launching my book, The English Amongst the Persians, which had come out. I was going to sign copies, and that sort of thing. There

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was quite a lot of publicity in the press. But, unfortunately, 100 copies, which were sent by air, had arrived, but the 1000 copies ordered by the bookseller were held up at the Turkish frontier.

And so, when I went down to my first session of "signing-on," there was a large queue of people, a hundred or more, already before 9:30, when the bookshop opened. And within three-quarters of an hour, I'd signed 100 copies, and that was that. Then people started queuing-up the next two or three days, and there was nothing for them. So that was my main purpose in going to Iran.

But I saw the Shah, and had a long, an hour's talk, I suppose, with him, on general things. Although I was a director of Shell and the Standard Chartered Bank, I wasn't talking any business with him at all. I was merely giving him a copy of my book, which he had had favorable reports on. In fact, the Minister of Court had bought up 2000 copies to distribute at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Pahlavi Dynasty. And so, he knew about the book, and was complimentary about it.

He ranged over the whole, wide field of international affairs, and, as usual, had a firm grasp of the situation.

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He was worried about what was happening in Afghanistan. He was worried about Ethiopia, even, Somaliland. And looked at it with broad, world perspective. But he was not at all worried, apparently, about the internal situation. He had nothing to say of any interest on the internal situation.

As usual, he had a complaint about the BBC and The Economist. I don't know whether The Times came into it, but I knew he was very upset about something the BBC had said, I've forgotten what it was. And I counter-attacked, because shortly before I went to Iran, there'd been a very nasty article in the English edition of Kayhan -- Kayhan International, I think it was, it may have been in Ettela'at also.

This was an article attacking Sir Roger Stevens <sp?>, one of my predecessors in Tehran, on the grounds that he had written an article in The Spectator, the weekly paper, which the Shah regarded as unfavorable. Well, I had heard about this article in The Spectator.

In fact, I heard about it from the Iranian Ambassador in London, Parviz Raji, who had telephoned me -- I think the article appeared in February -- about some other matter. I think it was a question of ... Weidenfeld, the publisher,

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tried to get him to agree to write a biography about the Shah. Raji had phoned me up to ask whether I thought this was a good idea.

And I told him I thought it a very silly idea, because anything said about the Shah in order to please the Shah would be purely propaganda, and would be self-defeating, I thought. And I said I wouldn't touch it, if I were he. And then he said had I seen a very good article by Roger Stevens in The Spectator?

So I bought it and saw this review, which I've got here. I can show it to you. And it was Roger Stevens reviewing two or three books about Iran. He said some very nice things about the Shah's regime. He mentioned SAVAK, but not in any great condemnation of its methods, and so on. But anybody reading it with a balanced mind would have seen this as a favorable article about Iran by an eminent person like Roger Stevens.

So I said to the Shah, "Why did you authorize this attack on Roger Stevens?" I said, "He's one of your best friends in England. He's recognized as such. He loves Iran as much as I do, and he's only got Iran's interests."

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And the Shah drew himself up on the seat, and said, "He has no right to refer to my reforms as moderate. They are radical." And that was the extent of that.

I went into the history of this, and I'm pretty certain that probably it was a SAVAK man in the embassy had telegraphed about this article out to Tehran. Somebody -- one person -- mentioned to me is Perviz Adi, who was in charge of the press in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was not a very nice person. Nice towards the British, at any rate. He'd got an English mother -- I think that may account for it.

He had gone to the Shah and said, "You see, this man Stevens ~~is~~ referring to your reforms as 'moderate'?" And so the Shah said, "Right. Attack Stevens." And so that's how it was done.

I just cite that as an extraordinary example, but a typical example, of the Shah's vindictiveness and pettiness, and how he would listen to a relatively minor sort of official. I didn't tell him that his ambassador in London, Raji, had told me he thought it was an excellent article, because that would have been the end of Raji! At any rate, I mention that as a sideline on the Shah's character.

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Having said all that, I went from the Shah to see . . .

Q. What else did you say to the Shah?

A. I can't remember. I will dig it out in a few minutes, if you like -- let's switch off -- I'll pull out my diary and we'll see.

Q. Before we continue with your meeting with the Shah, could you give a reference to this article by Mr. Roger Stevens?

A. Yes. It appeared in The Spectator, 26th of February, 1977. I've forgotten, and haven't got a copy of, the Kayhan article attacking him, but it was quite soon afterwards.

Well, I think the best thing about the Shah, because memories are bad, and although I never kept a very full diary, it might be worthwhile just reading my entry, although it's a rough-and-ready one.

Q. Fine.

A. Because I don't normally keep a diary. I gave up keeping a daily diary when I retired from being ambassador in Tehran.

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But when I went on trips I tend to keep one.

This is dated "Tehran, Tuesday, 19th of April, 1977"

"9:00 am. Set off with Majjid in the embassy car <he was the chauffeur> for my 10:15 am audience with H.I.M. at the Niavaran Palace.

"I was ushered in bang-on at 10:15. The Shah greeted me with a beaming smile and 'You haven't changed a bit.' <quote> I said the same of him. He then thanked me for helping Iranian causes in England. I told him of St. Anthony's seminar on Iran last term. He bristled slightly when I said the Persian students were afraid of answering questions, etc., because of fear of spies.

"I also had a bit of an argument with him over Kayhan's recent article containing Roger Stevens' review for The Spectator. The Shah insisted he was entitled to 'radical,' but did admit that Roger was a good friend of Iran's.

"We talked international politics a bit. H.I.M. very worried about the state of Turkey (especially), Pakistan, and India. Also hates the idea of a Palestinian state, which would, he

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said, be the end of Jordan. He also spoke of a recent C.I.A. report of Russian oil shortage in a few years' time. This would increase Russian interest in Middle East oil and the Indian Ocean.

"I presented him with a copy of my book. He said he had heard it was very good, and when I said I hoped he wouldn't let it be pirated, indicated that, though Persia has not yet signed any copyright agreement, steps would be taken to see that my book, at least, wasn't pirated. <I might add, in parentheses, that he was good to his word, and it wasn't pirated till Khomeini came into power. The diary continues:> I reminded him of an earlier conversation when I had told him that it was a waste of money to commission books about Iran.

"On Asadollah (that is, Asadollah Alam), he said he thought he would not be able to work full-time again. He might begin writing his memoirs, as he had many confidences of the Shah, which others had not.

"Audience lasted half an hour, and was a very friendly one. On my way downtown, I looked in at the Kayhan Bookshop to be told they still had no further copies of the book, and that since I left them at 11:00 am the previous morning, over 300 people had been 'round wanting to buy the book and get my

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autograph.

"Back at the embassy, I reported on my audience to Robert Allerton and George Chalmers <ap??>. Tony Parsons has been away, in the South."

That's it. The rest is just personal stuff.

Q. Did you also see Mr. Alam on this trip?

A. No, I think he was away. Oh, no, I must have had dinner with him, I think. I saw him, I didn't have any talk.

Q. But I know that you did see Dr. Eghbal.

A. Yes. Let me see, I ...

Did you ask me another question?

Q. Did you see Mr. Alam or Dr. Eghbal?

A. Yes, well, I don't think Alam was there. I haven't got any record of seeing him. But I did go and call on Dr. Eghbal, who was the head of the National Iranian Oil Company, who was an old friend of mine. He had once or twice been

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down to my house here in Haddenham, and I knew he would be upset if I didn't see him. But I was very rushed for time because of this book being launched. And I was giving a lecture at the British Institute. But I did see him on Saturday, the 16th of April. This is the entry in my diary for that day:

"Worked on my lecture in the embassy library in morning, apart from three-quarter hour call on Eghbal at his N.I.O.C. office. He was remarkably and surprisingly critical about the state of things here. Corruption worse than ever, discontent widespread, difficulties with labor, the Shah surrounded by flatterers and unwilling to listen to people. extraordinary to have Eghbal, the most loyal of Persians, talking thus. Apparently he hasn't opened his heart to Tony Parsons like this." And that was it.

Then I went back and told Tony Parsons, and he said, well, he'd heard this indirectly, but not directly. In his book, Tony Parsons, although he mentions this interview of mine, he implies that he had heard this from Eghbal, too. But, in fact, he hadn't, not direct. He told me at the time.

Q. Do you remember a little more about what Dr. Eghbal said, aside from that brief ...?

A. No, I can't remember anything. Except he was vitriolic about the Shah and the royal family. And the corruption, and the discontent, and how the Shah would listen to nobody at all. Coming from Eghbal, who has always been the most loyal and sycophantic of ministers, really, it was very surprising.

Although, I might say that, before that, after Eghbal had been Prime Minister -- and he was exiled to Paris for a bit, wasn't he? Then, he went like, as I mentioned yesterday, General Bahtiar, wanting to see me before I went to Tehran. So, Eghbal wanted to see me. Well, I didn't mind seeing Eghbal, because he was an old friend, and he was living in Paris. And I saw him in Paris -- my wife and I were there -- and we had dinner with him. And he then was extremely critical about the Shah and everything.

Q. What aspect of the Shah?

A. I can't remember.

But when he went back and got back into favor, not a word. And, of course, he was always nudging to get into the picture with the Shah. It was most extraordinary, sort of conceit of the man. Although, basically he was a modest person, and I

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liked him. And I believe he was honest, unlike some of his brothers.

Q. What was the reaction of your embassy when you described what <unclear>

A. Well, I don't know, because when you go back as a visitor, nobody takes much notice of you. I reported this, and I was off seeing my friends, so I don't know.

But I think, in the light of history, they didn't pay enough attention to what was, you know, quite a danger signal then. Because, as anybody who reads Tony Parsons' book will see, that right up until the end he seemed to be quite confident all would be well. And this was, what, nearly two years before the Shah fell. So, there was a big danger signal then, that was ignored.

Q. Obviously, you didn't see fit to make any hints about it when you saw the Shah yourself, three days later.

A. No, I didn't mention it. It would have been totally out of place, I think. And I didn't make any effort to report it to the Foreign Office. When an ambassador retires, he tends to keep his nose out of things. At any rate, I'd reported it

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to the embassy in Tehran, and I felt that was as far as I should go, because they have to weigh up that against all their other information, which may or may not support it.

Q. Did you see any other important Iranians?

A. No, not as far as I can remember. You know, when one's been in a country as long as I had, you have a vast number of friends there. I was chiefly concerned with seeing my friends and being entertained, and was completely exhausted by the sort of entertainment we got. But I don't think I saw anybody else of any political consequence.

Q. Hoveida, for instance?

A. No, Hoveida gave a lunch for me, and I might just look up that. Because, I mentioned yesterday, it was a rather disappointing lunch in the sense that Hoveida struck me as being arrogant and power had gone to his head. And he wasn't the sort of modest, friendly Hoveida that I'd known when I was there.

There was an odd mullah. The British have always been accused of having links with the mullahs, and so on.

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Q. I wanted to ask you about that.

A. As I say in the introduction to my new book that's coming out, to the best of my knowledge, the link between the British and the mullahs took place over a limited period in the early days of this present twentieth century, when Sir Arthur Hardinge was in charge of the embassy. He had contact with some of the Ulama, and he saw the Ulama as being very anti-Russian and also anti-Shah, at that time. He feared that the Ulama might do something really rash, and so provoke the Shah to call in Russian assistance.

He therefore thought it would be a good thing to try and influence the mullahs, both in favor of British interests, in moderation, but also to avoid them doing anything which would lead to Russian invasion of Iran, which would force the British to also move into Seistan. He got permission from the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne <sp?>, to deal with the mullahs, the clergy. Hand out monetary funds, both to them in Tehran, and in Najaf and Karbala.

In the end, I think, by about 1905 or thereabouts, the leading Ulama he was in touch with died. I've forgotten his name, but it's all in the Public Record Office. And, as far as I can discover, and I made a number of inquiries, that

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contact with the clergy came to an end, then. It certainly would have come to an end after the 1907 Anglo-Russian Conversation.

Now, since then, to the best of my knowledge -- and I've looked through countless embassy papers, you know, I've had the time -- going back over the period, there was no real link with the mullahs, at all.

After I left Tehran, John Russell, the Councillor at the embassy, whom I mentioned yesterday, did have a contact with the Imam Jom'eh of the day. But you probably know, the Imam Jom'eh of that time -- this is 1959-60 -- was more a businessman than a mullah. John Russell was always rather hypnotized by names, and just because it was Imam Jom'eh he used to see him occasionally. But he was not what I call a regular informant of the embassy, and there was no special link. It was just that period.

The Imam Jom'eh was brought to see me in London, when I was an undersecretary. Again, he was after business, not after any religious things. So that was a link with the mullahs, but a very tenuous one.

Q. This is Dr. Hassan Imami that you must be referring to.

A. Was it? Was that his name? Yes, that was the one. Yes, that's the one. But there was no question of him being a sort of agent of the British.

And then, in my day, there was a very curious chap who I always regarded as not normal, called Shoushtari, who had a beard, and talked very broken English. He greeted me, I think, in the street one day, as: "Ah, you are the British Ambassador. I must come and talk to you." And then I met him at Prince Gholam-Reza's, at the time of, at Nowruz, you know. He was at home in his palace, and receiving people. I went there and he was there.

And this chap used to come 'round to the embassy, oh, about every three or four months, sometimes, I think, <during> my last few years. And talk nonsense. I mean, he talked about intelligence service, and all this sort of thing, but, you know, he was really mad.

And when I was in Tehran the last time, he saw me in a taxi, or he was in a taxi and I was in the street. This led to him coming around to the embassy. And I put my entry as: "The Mad Mullah, Shoushtari, called in the afternoon." And that was all.

I would have thought that was the sum-total of British links with the mullahs.

Q. Does your statement include whatever contacts the intelligence services may have had?

A. Yes. I never heard of them having any links with the clergy. I would think, you see, after the Muharram riots, at any rate, in 1963, for all practical purposes, the mullahs -- we may have been wrong, but -- seemed to be a spent force. There was no evidence in my last few years there that the clergy were getting back into any sort of position of power at all.

I think that all developed after the '73-'74 increase in oil prices, the movement of people in from the countryside to the towns, the lack of accommodation, the inflation. All these things, which caused so much discontent, gave the mullahs a captive audience in the mosque, about the only place the people had to go to get any comfort anywhere. But that's my theory -- I wasn't there.

Q. Between 1977 and, I suppose '79 or '80, when you met the Shah in Nassau, in between, did you see any of the former or

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current high officials of Iran's government: Mr. Aiam or Hoveida or anybody <unclear> in London or in Tehran or anywhere else?

A. Yes, Mr. Aiam in fact came down here with his wife to stay with us in 1973, I think it was, he was over here. He spent one night, and we took him out to dinner at a pub near Aylesbury <sp?>. When we got back, the telephone was ringing furiously. It was Afshar, the ambassador, to say that he'd got news that Aiam's mother was very ill, and he must return immediately to Tehran. In fact, I think she'd died.

And so, instead of Aiam spending a week-end with us, he went back early the next morning and caught the plane.

I saw him whenever he came to London. But he never came down here again, and I was sometimes rather puzzled. He seemed to be rather elusive. Whether he had a girl in the background, or not, I don't know. His wife was with him, but he was

When he got very ill, nearly dying in Paris, I did telephone to the American Hospital in Paris, and talked to him on the phone. I said, "Look, I'll come over and see you." Because I was, as I say, very fond of him. He said, "No, I'm getting better, and I'm going down to the South of France to recover."

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"Why don't you come down there?"

Well, my wife and I, Iona, were planning to go to France. In fact, I think we'd already bought our tickets to go, sometime, a month or so, ahead. And so, I said, "All right, we'll fly down to see you." So I flew down with my wife to the South of France. I've got a note where -- I've forgotten where it was, no. -- somewhere outside Nice. And stayed with Aiam, as his guest, for two days. And he was a sick man. He had detectives ready -- we did one or two walks together, but he couldn't walk very far.

But we didn't talk politics, at all. He did, I remember, though, tell me he had to get permission from the Shah even to have me as his guest in the South of France. He didn't dare move without getting the Shah's permission.

At one stage -- it may not have been there, but when I went back to Tehran -- he I'd given a talk at St. Anthony's just after I retired -- it must have been some time in the spring of 1972, perhaps, it may have been in '71 -- to quite a crowded audience at the Middle East Center, on British Interests in Iran. I had fallen out with Afshar, the ambassador, I suppose over that incident I mentioned in Switzerland, but also some very injudicious remarks he made

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in a speech to the Iran Society.

So, Afshar didn't like me at all. Well, he'd sent somebody down from the embassy to listen. And I gave a talk about Iran, which, I think, from the point of view of the more liberal members of St. Anthony's, was regarded as far too favorable towards Iran and the Shah, and all his good works. But a report went from Afshar, which Al'am told me about later, to the Shah, saying that I had given a very hostile report.

I don't know what he said, I never saw the thing. But Al'am said the Shah showed him this telegram, and said, "See, that's what your English friend does." So that was that.

Well, it may have been a year or so later, I went to America. I was invited by the National Defense College of Canada to go and talk, at Kingston, Ontario. And while there, I went down to Chicago, where I had been Consul some years before. And I gave a talk there, to the, I think it was, Council on Foreign Relations.

I talked along very similar lines to the talk I gave to St. Anthony's. There the Iranian Consul-General, I think his name was Hatan, wanted, I suppose, to win favor with the

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Shah. He sent a panegyric about this excellent speech I had given. And so, the next time I saw Aiam, he said he'd had this report also, you see. So I said, "Well, this is Afshar's interpretation as opposed to another man." I just mention that as the total unreliability of certain Iranian diplomats.

Q. I'm interested in sort of the trends that you may have noticed in Mr. Aiam's view of the situation in Iran and his relationship with the Shah. Did you get any assessment <unclear> at any point in the latter years of his life?

A. Well, I think that he became increasingly disillusioned. When I first went there, in '63, as ambassador, he was close to the Shah, was able to, I think, influence him to some extent. But, I can't remember what year, but towards the end, maybe in 1965-66 or thereabout, he would tell me that the Shah wouldn't listen to him at all. He was increasingly disillusioned.

And also, because the Shah knew he was a friend of mine, he seemed to enjoy spoiling his Friday's riding with me, because Aiam undoubtedly enjoyed this. We very rarely talked business. Usually he was reminiscing about the past. Or he might have had his girl-friend down there riding, or

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something like that. It was a very happy occasion, and we both greatly enjoyed riding at Farahbad.

But, as the years went by, the Shah seemed deliberately to try and stop him riding with me. We would go down there, and then there'd be a message from the Palace: the Shah wanted to see Alam, and that sort of thing. I gathered both from Alam and from his wife that this was almost deliberate by the Shah.

I don't think he resented him having a friendship -- well, he may have even resented that. But he didn't want him to enjoy himself. So I think Alam, who was very loyal, and never said anything to me against the Shah personally. But I think he became increasingly disillusioned by him. And by the fact that he wouldn't listen to him.

And, in the end, you see, Alam told me that he thought the Shahbanu's position was in jeopardy, because she used to stand up to him, and try and influence him on certain things. For instance, when there was trouble about one of the night-clubs up in Shemiran. The Shah had talked about people with long hair, and so on.

You may remember, the police raided one of these night-clubs,

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and took off these various artists who were there, and cut their hair. And this news, of course, got to the Empress, who, by lunch-time, when she saw the Shah, and told him about it and complained, and by the end of the day the Chief of Police had been dismissed. I've forgotten the year. But that was the sort of influence she did have at one time.

But I think that all vanished towards the end of my period. The Shah wouldn't listen to anybody. I know in one of my diaries, about 1970 or '69, I have a sort of odd thing: "The Shah's getting too big for his boots." This was the sort of feeling that was developing.

Q. As early as that?

A. Yes. And certainly when I had to make my recommendation about whether the Queen

My feeling was: why should we send the Queen? The Shah had become so arrogant. He was taking a very hostile line over some of our problems over the Gulf islands, and that sort of thing. And so, I had no compunction at all in recommending that the Queen shouldn't go.

I think that was indicative, in a way, of my own, personal

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feelings about the Shah. One book, which recently came out, in 1980, by J.B. Kelly <?>, called Arabia -- you probably know the book. He talks about my "passionate admiration" for the Shah. Well, that's totally untrue.

On the other hand, I thought he was providing the best leadership that the country was likely to get, and for that reason should be supported. But any "passionate admiration" for him I never had.

Q. But in your last meeting with Mr. Alam, you don't remember anything significant, which is worth noting?

A. None at all, no. Each time I went back -- I think that last time he must have been away, or he was ill. But the previous times I'd been back, I saw him. He gave a dinner for me. But there was no discussion of substance at all, as far as I remember. I would have recorded it, I think, if there'd been anything worthwhile.

Also, just after I retired, I did go -- my wife and I both went -- and stayed with him in Arosa. He was skiing there with his wife. I was conducting, or going to be a chairman, of an American seminar in Rome. You know that -- what's it called? -- that Institute of East Mediterranean Studies? I

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had been asked to be chairman of a seminar titled "The Changing Balance of Power in the Persian Gulf."

As a preliminary, I went down to Rome to discuss this with the Americans. And on my way back, I went and spent two days with Alem at Arosa, with his family there.

He was summoned away to see the Shah at St. Moritz when I was there. So there was no peace for the man. He also had -- there was a rather unpleasant character there, talking about Kish, a man whose name has come out in various trials since as a corrupt member.

Q. Was this "Kish" or "Qeshm"?

A. Qeshm, wasn't it? What was the island?

Q. Well, there was one that they set up as a resort and brought people from France, and ...

A. Yes, that's it.

Q. Kish.

A. Kish, it was. Alem was much involved in that. I'm

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always is, I, because you know his two daughters live in great style in London, and a lot of their money comes from being involved in that. I never got to the bottom of it, but it was a nasty bit of business.

I've forgotten -- if you want it, I can give you the name of the man who was there at Arosa, with plans of all these things -- it begins with an "M". I've forgotten it. I've got his card. But there was a nasty smell about the man, altogether.

Q. Was it Monsef?

A. That's it, Monsef. Yes. That's the man. And he was there at Arosa, seeing Alam with plans. His daughters seemed to be all half-involved, you know. It was a curious set-up.

Q. Any other important Iranians that you saw before seeing the Shah in Nassau?

A. No. Well, I saw a lot over the years, because they used to come over. And even though I was retired, there were Iranians, such as Mehdi Pirasteh, who was retired in Brussels, now he's in Canada, but he seemed to think that I could still make him prime minister. And he came over to see

me, and that was all he wanted. One had -- other people like that used to turn up -- I can't remember them.

The belief of these, you might say, senior Iranians, in believing that a former British ambassador could make them prime minister, is quite extraordinary. Pirasteh was one example.

Hossein Purnia came down to see Bagher Purnia. Bagher Purnia came down to see me, too. I think he wanted something like that, too. He'd fallen out with Hoveida -- I never got to the bottom of that.

We've had a stream of Iranians come. And some of them, as I say, wanted help like that. And would never believe it when one told them one had no power at all.

A. During the last few months or weeks of the Pahlavi Dynasty, was your advice or council sought by your own government or by Iranians, as to what was going on or what should be done?

A. Not at all, no. I don't think on any occasion. And I think the pity was that in Tehran there was nobody at the time who had any, you might say, accumulated knowledge, of

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the Iranian situation. I am told that people didn't know who Entezam was, really. I mean, they could find out, because we had lists of personalities, but there was nobody who had contact with these people at all. Not that it would have made any difference, I think. But I wasn't asked at all, by anybody.

Q. And then, what made you go see the Shah in Nassau?

A. Well, the problem then was, as you know, the Shah was wanting to find somewhere to live in exile. And the Americans had agreed to have him, but when he stopped off in Egypt, the Americans had second thoughts, and said no.

And, I'm not absolutely certain of the truth of this, but I believe that from Morocco the Shah sent an Englishman, who was one of these PR men hanging around the Shah -- I've got his name somewhere, I may be able to tell you later, I've forgotten it now -- to find out from Mrs. Thatcher, if she won the elections, would she let him settle in England?

Q. He did have an estate here?

A. He had an estate, at <?>, in Surrey. Which he'd never seen, as far as I know.

The story is -- I can't vouch for this -- that Mrs. Thatcher said, yes, if she won the elections, she'd seen no reason why he shouldn't come. Well, she won the election. And the thing was: let the Shah come. And Lord Carrington, who was Foreign Minister, who also knew the Shah well, who was a man of compassion, also felt that the Shah should be allowed. But the officials in the Foreign Office, headed by Anthony Parsons, who was then the undersecretary dealing with the Middle East, advised very strongly against it.

They had three reasons. One was a security reason -- they said there were a great many Iranian students, thousands of them, all gunning for the Shah. You would have a very serious security problem. Mrs. Thatcher was prepared to face up to that one.

Then there was the commercial argument that if you do this, you'll either find you can't get oil from Iran, or you'll have your exports stopped. Both of which were important to the British economy at the time -- particularly oil at that time. But no, she was prepared to face that one.

And the third argument was: well, all right, but the fanatic Ayatollahs will probably kidnap the British ambassador and

all the members of his staff, and hold them against the Shah. Are you then prepared to either see the British ambassador shot or surrender and hand over the Shah? And that was what made Mrs. Thatcher flinch, as it were, and say, no, she wasn't prepared to face that. She was told that this is a genuine risk. And of course, it's quite true. Look at what happened to the Americans later!

So, there then was: would somebody go out and tell the Shah. Because they didn't want to just send a message. So I was summoned to the Foreign Office and asked whether I would go out.

And I said I would, on two conditions. I said, first of all, I was on the board of Shell, and I didn't want it to come out that I was out there hobnobbing with the Shah, because this might do damage to Shell, who were very reliant on Iranian oil at that moment.

And secondly, I said I was booked to go fishing the following week down on Exmoor, in a little pub. And I said I'm not going to give up that, because I won't be able to re-book, it's such a popular pub. So I must either go immediately, or after I've had my four days fishing. So, the answer was, all right. You go immediately.

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And so I was given a false passport. And I was taken to the airport by my wife. And I was told the only disguise I need wear, apart from the passport, was dark glasses. And off I went to Nassau.

We didn't want our High Commissioner there, a man called Duncan, who was an old friend of mine, to intervene with the local authorities. Because they were having trouble with their own people about the Shah being there. And we did not want to be under any obligation to them on the Shah. They might say, "All right. Now you take him off our hands." So our High Commissioner was told to fix an appointment with the Shah direct.

Well, the telephones were all cut that day. There'd been demonstrations against the Shah the day I was going out there.

Q. Where?

A. In Nassau.

Q. Really?

A. Oh, yes. And the telephones had all been cut off from this little island he was on, Paradise Island. And our High Commissioner went over to the club. You see, he was in a compound of a club on what was called Paradise Island. And he sat around the bar all day long, hoping to find someone who looked like an Iranian, whom he could tell about my coming. But he gave up. He couldn't find anybody.

So, when I arrived in the evening, he sent a very junior member of his staff to meet me, not to attract any attention. And I went and stayed with him. And he said, "Look, I'm in an absolute quandary. I don't know who, how we're going to get at the Shah, because I failed, the telephones are all cut." But by the next morning, the telephones were restored.

And I had learnt, from Mrs. Alam, whom I'd gone and had tea with the afternoon before I went off. I didn't tell her I was going off, but I just asked her out of curiosity, "Who's with the Shah?" And she told me that Kambiz Attabai was with the Shah.

Kambiz Attabai had come through London a few months before, and left a message. He'd telephoned me, and I wasn't there, but he'd come through. So I had a reason to -- he was an old friend of mine, he was in charge of the horses at Farahbad,

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where I used to ride. So I got through on the telephone to this club. And with a great deal of difficulty, eventually got hold of Kambiz Attabai.

I said who I was. I said I was here. And I told a lie, in a sense, I said, "I'm on my way to New York. I'm just here for a day or two, and would like to see you." So, I got in a taxi and went across, quite close to the High Commissioner's house, across the bridge to this club, and saw Kambiz. And we had a drink, and I told him I was there under a false name, Edward Wilson, my name was. So he kept on calling me "Edward" in a loud voice.

I told him why I'd come, and that I was anxious to see the Shah personally and explain. So, he said, "Well, I'll phone you back." So I went back to the High Commissioner's house. A few hours later, he telephoned and said, "Come over this afternoon."

And I went across in the afternoon, dressed like a tourist. Normally, when I saw the Shah, I wore morning-coat, but this time I went without a tie, and so forth, not to attract any attention. And got into the club quite easily. Then the Shah was in behind, you might say, a barricade of barbed wire with all sorts of American security men. And although Kambiz

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Attabai explained that I was expected by the Shah, they frisked me, and all the rest of it.

And I went in to see him in this little house. And the date of that was the 20th of May, 1979. If you like, I can read out my diary. It's quite a bit, but it's historically interesting.

Q. Yes.

A. This is my entry in the diary, Monday, 21st of May, 10:30 am, Nassau:

"Yesterday's events worked like clockwork, so that by suppertime we were able to telegraph the F.O.: 'Mission accomplished, etc.' I managed to get through to Kambiz at the Ocean Club by telephone, and arranged to meet him there at 11:00 am. I went there by taxi, a 10-minute journey across a bridge to the Paradise Island, wearing, as advised, dark glasses. We sat by the swimming-pool, surrounded by half-naked beauties and children, but out of earshot of others.

"I told Kambiz that I was under cover as Edward Wilson, and from that moment on, he called me 'Edward.' I told him why I

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wished to see H.I.M., and that it was important there should be no publicity. We then went on to discuss events in Iran, and the sadness of it all. Kambiz said the Shah had been far too indecisive in Tehran during the critical days, when firm decisions could easily have saved the situation.

"Kambiz' wife and children are in London, and he seems to be the only Persian of any seniority now with the Shah.

"I asked him about Amir Sadeghi, telling him about recent telephone conversations with him at home. He told me that Amir Sadeghi enjoyed support and confidence of the Empress, but not of the Shah. And that he, Kambiz, regarded him with some suspicion. He had not been able to explain how he had managed to get away from Tehran. He confirmed that Amir Sadeghi had visited the Empress here in Nassau. <We can talk about that later, perhaps.›

"I returned to the Duncan house after over an hour with Kambiz, who phoned shortly after lunch to say his Principal, meaning the Shah, would see me at 6:00 pm.

"Had a sleep in the afternoon. Then by taxi to the Ocean Club, wearing dark glasses and open-neck shirt. Kambiz was waiting me, and we walked 100 yards or so to the wired

compound within which the Shah and family are housed. American security men everywhere, all carrying walkie-talkies. Despite Kambiz' assurances, I was held up a few minutes at the entrance gate before being allowed to enter the compound, where I was frisked.

"I ran into the Crown Prince, and had a few words with him before being whisked into the small house where the Shah greeted me. We sat alone on two small sofas facing each other, with a coffee-table in between us. I was given a cup of tea, and the Shah drank plain mineral water.

"I had just over an hour with the Shah. I began and ended with the question of his asylum in the United Kingdom, and why H.M.G. could not 'for the moment, so long as the Persian government exercise no control over the country' offer asylum to the Shah or his family. I said I hoped the Shah would understand and accept this. He replied, 'I accept, but do not understand why you pay any attention to a government which does not matter.'

"We then had a rambling conversation along lines of some of my previous talks with him, though this was inevitably a gloomier one. He was inclined to blame his Western friends for giving him the wrong advice, to liberalize and introduce

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democratic ways, to quit the country.

"The loss of Iran was a serious blow for the West. He feared Iran would eventually go Communist, and feared, too, that this might happen in Egypt. The Middle East oil would be at risk, and that would be the end of the West. Russia was set on world domination. If not, why was she building up such a powerful navy? He did not believe, as some people seem to, that Russia could ever become a democratic country.

"Harking back, the Shah said he thought our biggest mistake was to have removed his father from the throne in 1941 -- he was never pro-Hitler. He spoke of the power of the mullahs. I reminded him of the farewell dinner he had given for Iona and me at Sadabad in September, 1955, when I had urged him, on instructions from the Foreign Office, to follow the example of his father, and crack down on the mullahs, who had been the inspiration of the anti-Baha'i riots earlier in the year. I reminded him that he had then told me that he was too weak to do so.

"We then spoke of the 1963 Muharram riots, when the Shah had effectively stamped on the mullahs. I broke in to ask him how many people had been killed on that occasion. He said 110. I told him that Alem had given me a figure of 94 or so,

which I had believed to be true, instead of the 1000 alleged by some. The Shah repeated the correct figure was 110. I was glad to hear this, as I have always believed, and this seems to confirm it, that Alam's figure was far nearer the truth than what was claimed by the Shah's critics.

"When the Shah indicated the time had come for me to go, I reverted to my brief on the asylum question, said that the Foreign Secretary wanted to be able to say in Parliament or elsewhere that the position had been explained to the Shah, who had both understood and accepted it. The Shah said that he thought we need say no more, and that he had not asked for asylum. I argued that this was not enough, and we must be able to say more.

"The Shah then agreed that we might say he understood and accepted, provided we also made it clear that he had not asked us for asylum. I said I felt sure Lord Carrington would agree to this.

"Early in our conversation, after I had told H.I.M. of our position, he said that there were possibilities of his settling in Austria, Switzerland, or 'one other country' (which, according to Kambiz, is Mexico).

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"In my morning talk with Kambiz, I said, in answer to his question, that I thought South Africa would be a suitable country. There were no Persian students there, the South Africans were grateful to the Shah for supplies of Iranian oil, their security service was a good one, etc. But Kambiz clearly did not like the idea, and there was no mention of it when I saw the Shah."

That was it.

The fact that, although there'd been quite a big campaign in London before I went out, to allow the Shah to come here, particularly in the right-wing British press, the Telegraph and The Daily Express, and by certain members of Parliament, once I'd been out to see him, although there was no publicity, nothing more was heard about it.

And I can only assume, because I haven't talked to Mrs. Thatcher about it since, that they must have told people like Julian Amory ?, and so on, who were championing the Shah coming here, that the Shah had been seen and the position explained to him. Because, as you probably know, nothing more appeared in the British press about having the Shah here in exile.

So that's the story. And I came and got my fishing.

Q. Julian Amory ? is -- what is his position?

A. He's a right-wing, Conservative Member of Parliament, for Brighton. And has always been a champion of lost causes really. When the Crown Prince, Reza, was over here in December, Amory was the chap who was arranging for him to meet people, and so on. They wanted me to have dinner with him. I wouldn't go. I just don't wish to be caught up in any of these maneuvers.

Q. Now I have a series of questions dealing with the things we've talked about up to this point. Some are general, and some are more specific.

The first one is of a general nature. As ambassador in Iran, what were your major goals and concerns? If you were to name three or four goals and concerns that you had as ambassador, things that you really had to look out for, what were those?

A. Well, the main one, of course, was to have the most friendly possible relations with the country, which meant with the Shah. In order to a) promote British strategic

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interests, such as overflying rights, and things like that, ensure the supply of oil. And to promote British exports.

Q. What does "overfly rights" mean? For military and civilian aircraft <?>?

A. <unclear> the time when there was a confrontation in Indonesia, in the early 1960s, over, not Brunei, but that area, you know. There was a confrontation. Well, we were able to overfly Iran with our military aircraft -- supplies. It's a very important things, this overflying rights. It was, when we had an empire east of Suez. And that was of great value.

And, of course, we wanted to keep the Shah in the Western camp. I mean, it was, you might say, one's main objective was to have the best possible relations with Iran. And, therefore, satisfy him on his demands, when he wanted equipment and so on. When we could -- you know, military equipment or naval equipment, and so on.

But I think the overriding interest of any ambassador, who has the interests of his country at heart, is to promote the most friendly possible relations. Because, from that develop all the other things.

Q. I have a question about the export and commercial end of what you discussed. I'm just wondering what would be the range of intervention or role that the ambassador would have to pursue in these matters. For instance, I've just noted down some of the larger deals that were concluded during your term as ambassador. There was a Leyland bus factory, <?>-Hornsby generators, Standard Telegraph and Cable, control equipment. And then, of course, the one for the larger non-military projects was the Iran National agreement with Roots <?>, which a lot of Iranians believed was partly owned by the royal family, which was never proved one way or the other.

A. Well, I very rarely intervened on commercial matters. I considered my function, if a businessman came out and wanted help, I mean wanted to see the Shah, he would normally arrange that through his own agent. But if there was any particular reason why I should intervene, get an audience, I would do so.

For instance, when Dunlop, at one stage, were interested, I think I did ask, because there was serious trouble. The chairman of Dunlop came out -- what's his name? Sir Geddes ?, I've forgotten his first name -- he came out to sign up.

the negotiation for a Dunlop factory. Ansari, Houshang Ansari, had just taken over as Minister of Commerce or Economy, and he suddenly, at the last minute, said that he must have a guarantee from Dunlop, that after two years of production they would export a third of their production.

And Sir Ray Geddes ? said, "I can't give them this. I just can't be certain. <?>" And this was a major hold-up on a negotiation which had gone on for about three years. In that case, I went to Alam, I think, I can't remember fully, and said, "Look, I think it's pretty essential that Geddes ? sees the Shah and explains his position." That would be the sort of thing.

But normally I did not intervene on behalf. I mentioned yesterday how Ali Mansour summoned me to tell me he'd <?> placed an order for Leyland busses. Well, I'd never intervened on that. It was all done through the agents, and so on.

So, on the promotion of exports, which became much more acute in the time of my successors, and I think they got much more involved in pushing. There was such competition among different But in my day, I was concerned with keeping, you could say, relations friendly. Because if the Shah took

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again the British for some particular reason or other, he was quite capable of saying, "Right. No orders to the British."

He did the same thing with the French when Pompidou didn't go for the celebrations in Persepolis in 1971. I believe he cancelled all the big orders given to the French, and for a number of years the French were in the doghouse.

I can't think of any particular things in which I intervened with the Shah. I did go and see him about an attempt by Mehdi Sami'i, when he was governor of the Central Bank, to alter the terms under which the two British banks were operating in Iran. I said that I thought this was contrary to what had been undertaken, and the solemn agreements, and so on, but ...



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DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDGHİ
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ANSARY, HUSSANG

ASHRAF, PRINCESS

CASEY, LORD

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 11, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

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On Centurion Tanks, which was a big order, the initiative came from the Iranian side, to the best of my memory. We had arms-salesmen coming out, but I didn't get involved in promoting the sales. It was the Shah dealing with -- I think his name was Sutcliffe -- at that time, who came out from the Ministry of Defense, and so on.

Q. So, you didn't find yourself in a position of either promoting or exerting personal effort on behalf of a deal or project, or trying to, perhaps, discourage the deal. For instance, some American ambassadors have claimed that they were against over-purchases of military equipment and, therefore, they saw it as their duty to try to sort of slow the Shah down in certain purchases.

A. Yes. Well, I think that's true. The Americans were not keen. It was the salesmen. At one stage, there was a complaint by our arms salesman. I saw a report which he sent to our military attache where he said that I was not giving them the support they wished. When I got to London, I had it out with them. and I said, "This is utter nonsense. I don't think it's for me to push all the time and to buy British -- whatever it was -- Rapier ground-to-air missiles, or something."

I was quite prepared to weigh <?> in and get Alem, or whoever it was, to see the representative, but I didn't want to get myself too involved. And I, in fact, was unhappy about the extent that we were pushing arms. But I didn't take any steps to discourage it.

You asked about Iran National and Roots. That is quite an interesting case, because what happened there was two brothers -- I think their name was Hatemi, wasn't it?

Q. Khayami.

A. Khayami, was it? One or two of them came to see me with a letter of introduction from, I think, Ardeshir Zahedi, who

was close to them. They told me that they had a license to assemble passenger cars. They were already doing something, a Mercedes-Benz, I think. And they wished to have a British car. If they couldn't get a British car, they would turn to Germany, or France -- I've forgotten.

I was quite impressed with what they said. And, with my Commercial Councillor, who I think then was Peter Wilkinson, who has since died, I went down to look at this Iran National works. Well, I'm no expert on factories, but nevertheless, it was an impressive thing. So, I went back to the embassy, and wrote a despatch to the Foreign Office saying that we'd had this request, and that I thought this should be taken seriously, and we sh ld try and get Roots -- or whoever (I may have mentioned Roots, but I said they should try).

And, of course, Wilkinson wrote to the Board of Trade, as it then was, and made the same point. He said this was a very serious request, and we should do something about it.

So, the government -- the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade -- got in touch with the motor manufacturers, and Roots came out. And that's how it started. In my office. Whether the royal family had interests didn't interest me. My interest was to see that the British manufacturer got it.

And they did.

And, you see, the same sort of thing happened with Dunlop. One of the Farmanfarmaians -- Ali, who's since died, he was killed in a skiing accident, I think -- Ali Farmanfarmaian came to see me one day in the office, and said he had got a license to set up a tire factory. He wanted to get Dunlop in, if possible. If not, he would go to the Americans. But could I do something?

I knew someone at Dunlop -- not Ray Geddes ?, I didn't know the chairman -- but I knew a man called Simon there, who has since left them. But I wrote to him, and said -- and also we went to the Board of Trade, and I said, "Look, this is a serious thing. Ali Farmanfarmaian is a highly intelligent operator, and this is worth going ..."

So, Dunlop took this up. And got to a point, where, as I mentioned, it was sabotaged by Ansari, in the end. An interesting gloss on that. Finally, when Ray Geddes went back to London, after having come out to sign, and then refusing to sign because he wouldn't accept this condition of Ansari's, he wrote me a manuscript letter saying that he was not going to sign unless they gave up this point, and that he feared American interests had got at Houshang Ansari, or

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something.

Well, I sent this letter up to Alem, just to show him that they were really pulling out. I said, "The Shah has said it will all be all clear." And so Alem went to the Shah, and said this had still been held up. And the Shah said, "Well, tell Ansari not to be so silly, and tell him to get on with it." And so Alem then sent this manuscript letter, of Sir Reay Geddes ? to me, to Ansari, and said, "Clear up this business. Dunlop are going to have the business."

Well, Ansari, being a very slippery and able chap, he picked up this insinuation that he was in the pockets of the Americans, and made a big issue of this, and said he would resign unless the British ambassador apologized. Alem telephoned me, and asked me to go and see him immediately. He said, "Look, I've made a very bad mistake. I didn't really read this letter properly. I sent it to Houshang Ansari, and this is the position. He demands"

I said, "Well, I can't apologize to him. I'm not going to apologize to him. I don't mind just saying, "I'm sorry, there's been a misunderstanding," or something, but Well, the upshot was, that i saw Ansari a week or two later -- I didn't ask to see him especially -- at the American

embassy dinner. And I just half-apologized, and said I am sorry. But that was enough for Ansari to get his way, and it went to Goodrich, not to Dunlop.

I mention that as the sort of dealing and the extent to which I would intervene. In something like that, where there'd been some really crooked business, I would intervene. But normally I didn't.

Q. But as far as the Iran National deal is concerned, it wasn't told to you, or you didn't sense that there were some very powerful figures behind this deal that these two brothers ...?

A. No, we took it straight on its merits. I didn't, certainly, make any issue of their being -- I didn't even know that Zahedi was involved, at that time. He sent these people with an introduction, but I didn't know that there was any of his money behind it, or that he was involved in any way.

Q. A question that seemed to pose itself at the time was that these contracts were being awarded to the major sort of powers as if each of them had a sort of predetermined share in the transactions that were being granted. A car-factory

with the U.S., a car-factory with Britain, another one with France. Did you see it ...?

A. Well, I certainly saw it a little bit like that, that the Shah was balancing-act, you know. But, after all, that's been -- it's in the Persian blood, isn't it? -- you know, balancing one power against another. And I think that the Shah enjoyed doing that sort of thing. And, of course, there was the question of who represented these firms.

I never got to the bottom of the extent to which Princess Ashraf was involved. The general belief was that, unless you had Ashraf, or her son, Shahram, involved, you weren't going to get any business. Whether that was true or not, I don't know. When I was asked whether firms should bring in Ashraf, I tended to say "no" -- not quite no, but say, "Well, I would keep her out of it." But, in fact, I think they found that they had, in some way or other, to get somebody like Ashraf involved.

Q. Again, another question that continues to come up in Iranian politics is the extent of U.S.-British rivalry/cooperation. Could you set this question straight? What was the extent of rivalry and cooperation?

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A. Well, as I said yesterday, in the early days, when I went, back in 1953, the cooperation was very close. Because the American oil companies were far from wishing to see BP kicked out of the country. They stood solid behind them, and wouldn't buy Persian oil -- "stolen oil" they called it. Because the American companies saw that, if this happened to a British company in Iran, it would probably happen to them next in Saudi Arabia or somewhere.

So the great myth, in Britain at any rate, that the Americans got us out is, I think, untrue. There had been an unfriendly ambassador before. I think Grady was unfriendly towards us, and may have encouraged Mossadegh. But, by the time I got there, and I'm talking about my time, the Americans were very helpful, and we got the oil agreement in which BP had a 40% share.

Now, when I went back as ambassador in '63, although I got on very well with Julius Holmes, in particular. He had served in London, he knew the British, and so on. The Americans were very much the top power then, and the British were no longer even in the position we were in in 1953. But I enjoyed, as I mentioned yesterday, just because of past history, a sort of rather special position in Iran. As British ambassador, and the fact that I'd been there in

'53-'55, and knew a lot of people.

And I sensed a certain jealousy of my position, particularly by Armin Meyer. Douglas Mac Arthur I had very little use for at all. He was friendly and all the rest of it, but he was just a gas-bag, as far as my judgment. And I never found him easy to work with.

But with the American Embassy as a whole, we, the British Embassy, got on well. There was no feeling, on my part, at any rate, that they were trying to steal marches on us. Of course, there was competition over exports, and on arms in particular.

And I remember, when the British did get a big order -- I think, I'm not certain -- for Rapier, I wanted to tell the American Embassy. Because it seemed to me that the Americans were primarily responsible for military supplies, and we should tell them. I wasn't allowed to.

And I remember sending a telegram to the Labour government saying: "If the export of arms is your only consideration, all right. But it does seem to me, in terms of Anglo-American cooperation, we should inform the Americans." The Americans had done some dirty work, I think, elsewhere,

muscling in on arms deals which we'd got. I wasn't allowed to tell the Americans.

As far as my own position in Iran was concerned, throughout all my period there, there was no feeling of trying to steal a march on the Americans. It was worth keeping in step with them, and not allowing the Iranians to play us off, one against the other, which they were inclined to do.

Q. My next question concerns certain arrests of prominent government officials under the banner of corruption.

Although some Iranians tended to believe that if a high government official was ever arrested for corruption, it had to do with a certain disloyalty or a misjudgment *<unclear>* in the area of politics. And there are three names that crop up during your stay in Iran.

One is Ahmad Naficy, who was Mayor of Tehran. The other one is Mr. Ebtehaj, who was arrested, I believe, before you arrived there, but was, perhaps, released at the time that you arrived. And the third one was General Ahmad Vossough, who, I believe, was a senior military officer, and maybe even Minister of War. Do you have any thoughts or reflections on these ...?

A. Yes, let me talk about Ebtehaj, the first one, because I know Ebtehaj very well. And when I went back to Tehran as ambassador, he had, of course, been in prison and been released, and so on. He was very upset because he wasn't invited to the Queen's Birthday Party. You know, it's extraordinary how people mind about these things. And he sent a message to me through Miss Palmer-Smith, who I mentioned yesterday, saying that he hadn't been invited.

So I looked into it, and he was on our list. He either hadn't got the invitation, and so on There was no question of leaving him off. So this message went back. And then I got a message that he was convinced that it was the British who had been responsible for having him arrested, and so on So, I said I was quite certain this was untrue. I think I talked to him about this. I said, "But I'll look into this whole question."

So, I dug out the files. And I found a lot about it. And what Ebtehaj had not told me, he had written to his old friend, a Cabinet Minister, Lord Casey, whom he had known in the war, complaining about this and saying that it was the British who had been responsible. And Casey, who is now dead, had then written -- he was in Australia, I think he was Governor-General -- to Alec Douglas-Home about this. And

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there'd been quite an inquest into this whole thing of Ebtehaj.

Alec Douglas-Home had written back and said there was absolutely no substance in this at all. Well, I found these, and various minutes in the embassy files, saying: "What an ass Ebtehaj is, to believe these things!" So I got hold of Ebtehaj, and I said, "Look, I think the best thing is for you to come and look at these papers. You can see yourself -- there are some quite rude things about you, being so stupid as to believe this." And so, he came into my office, and I showed him these papers. I don't think it ever convinced him, but nevertheless... That is the Ebtehaj case.

You see, Ebtehaj, for all his cleverness, and so on, he's got this old-world Persian mentality that the British have this thing. And he had serious trouble in his early days, when he was a junior clerk in the old Imperial Bank of Persia. And he always thinks that, from then onwards, the British were "agin" him.

But, as I told you yesterday, the one person I once told the Shah we had a great admiration for was Ebtehaj. We never, in the embassy, held this sort of thing against him. We always thought he was a good, straight man with a dynamism which was

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doing good things for Persia. So that's for Ebtehaj.

Ahmed Naficy I had come across when he was Mayor, and I'm almost certain -- well, I'm not certain, but from what Alam told me, it was Pirasteh, who was Minister of the Interior, who went to the Shah with, allegedly, information against Naficy, and had him arrested and put in prison. It was entirely a personal thing between Pirasteh ... This was told me by Alam. Because I used to see his wife -- she was a deputy, I think, and from what I'd seen of Ahmed Naficy I rather liked him.

I didn't know him in my first time in Tehran, but the second time. And what Pirasteh had against him, I don't know, but Alam told me this was, you might say, a dirty bit of work by Pirasteh. Certainly the British had nothing involved. You know, we had no particular interest in him at the time.

The other one I don't know anything about at all. When did that happen?

Q. That happened in March '64, when he first arrested. And then sentenced to prison several months later.

A. No, I am not aware of that at all.

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Q. Well, the point I was trying to make was -- it hadn't occurred to me that the British had anything to do with this. But I was wondering if you could reflect on the Persian view that these people got themselves in trouble with the Shah because of some political indiscretion, rather than because they had acted in some corrupt fashion.

A. Ebtehaj, I don't know. I think there were so many people gunning for Ebtehaj. I don't know what the reason ... because I wasn't there when he actually went to prison.

Naficy, I just can't think of any reason at all. There was, of course, another case of a man demoted, dismissed and then sent as ambassador to Spain -- General Djam. Which was in 1970 or '71.

Q. Were you familiar with that case?

A. Well, only to the extent that it was some other general who was jealous of Djam, and who went to the Shah and denounced him as having taken on giving declarations in his own name instead of the Shah's name, or talking about the Shah as "my brother." There was something like that -- one of these silly But again, very indicative of the

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pettiness of the Shah on these things.

In British view, and I think in American view, too, General Djam was regarded as one of the best Chiefs-of-Staff that the Iranians had had. A straight-thinking chap, and was just suddenly pushed out and sent to Madrid as ambassador.

Q. Again, neither the British nor the Americans were in a position to voice any sort of displeasure....

A. You wouldn't do that sort of thing. That was the Shah's decision. You might dislike it very much. We were very upset by it, and so, I think, were the Americans, but no possible good, and much harm, might have been done by voicing any displeasure. The Shah would never go into reverse.

Q. My next question has to do with the opposition to the Shah which we discussed yesterday. And also has to do with this issue of political development, and possible gradual move toward democracy in Iran. And also has to do with the fact that one reason why religious forces were able to take over in Iran is because all the other possibilities of political alternatives were removed from the scene.

Now, in '63-'64, of course, we've talked about those riots,

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which were of a different variety than the rest I'm going to mention. But, at that time, what notice, if any, did you take of Khomeini? Was he just an isolated individual, or a potential leader?

A. No, we didn't -- looking through some of the Foreign Office papers the other day, on Monday, I see he's mentioned as having been released from prison, and then being re-arrested after the American Immunities Bill <?> criticism, I think, in October. And then, I didn't see any other reference -- there were only two references I came <to> for him. But he was important enough a figure to be mentioned by name in my despatches.

And then, I remember, and I have to look up -- it must have been when he was released from prison -- I went down to Qom. We had some friends staying with us, Sir Frank Lee, who was at that time Master of Corpus Christie, Cambridge. And he and his wife ... I used to like going to Qom. It was, you know, you had to be rather careful how you behaved there -- and put your wife in chador, and so on. But it was very much a Persian town.

And I took Sir Frank Lee and his wife down there. And there were taxis galore going down there, with mullahs in them ...

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And I couldn't make out what it was. This was when Khomeini had been released and returned to Qom. I remember thinking, "Now if the Shah hears I have been in Qom this day, again he will think: The British Ambassador." So I sent word, through Alami, I think, that I had taken visitors down to Qom, and so on.

But that was the only thing. There's no recollection in my mind of ever regarding Khomeini as a potential leader. He went off to exile in Turkey, and then to Iraq. And by the time I left Iran, he was in Iraq and was broadcasting fairly regularly.

I do remember that the Le Monde correspondent, Eric Rouleau, I think it was, went out to see the Shah shortly before the Persepolis thing. I'd left Tehran, so it must have been the spring or the summer of 1971. And he said to the Shah: "Aren't you worried about these broadcasts?" The Shah dismissed it as of no importance, and went on to say "on dit": "One says that he's a member of the British Intelligence Service." I mean, the Shah, in his own mind, the British again, you see, were trying to upset Persepolis.

But we never -- certainly in my day, and I don't think my successors ever attached any great importance to Khomeini as

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a potential leader of the opposition then.

Q. Now, following this Khomeini affair, certain leaders of the National Front were brought before a military court, and also Mr. Mehdi Bazargan and Ayatollah Taleghani were brought before military courts and sentenced to ten years imprisonment, which, in a way, put an end to that group for at least 13 years.

I'm wondering if, at that time, any sort of a thought was given as to what the repercussions of this kind of behavior toward relatively moderate non-revolutionary ...

A. When did that happen?

Q. This was in '64.

A. '64 ... I can't remember paying any attention. I would have noticed it, I think, in looking through the annual reports on Monday, at the Foreign Office. And I can't remember. I don't think there was any reference to it at all.

Q. Then in '71, the first of a series of executions of, sort of, the young Leftists began, when 13 members of what they

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called sort of Chinese-type communists, who allegedly plotted something, were executed.

I guess the question I'm trying to ask you is in two parts. One is whether you saw any threat to the long-term stability of Iran, with the actions that were being taken against moderate political forces who wanted to -- who were really constitutionalists, at least at that time. That's one point.

The second point is, as ambassador of the country which is probably the most democratic in the world, did you feel any sort of a conflict between what your own values in your own country were and what was being practised in the host-country. In what way did you resolve this in your own mind?

A. Well, I don't think in those years I was there, this question worried me at all. First of all, one was delighted to see that the chaos and weakness and instability of earlier years, which I'd experienced in '53-'55, had largely been overcome. And from 1963, after the Muhamram riots, as comes out continually in my annual reports, there was stability, and the Shah was moving forward.

And I think that was, for me, the main consideration, the

fact that he had to be tough with dissidents., whether they were the mullahs or other, was a sign that he had got a grip of the country. So, I was never worried, and I can't recollect ever having warned London that the Shah was building up trouble for himself, other than that I quoted those two last despatches I wrote from Tehran in April and March 1971, when I said there was trouble on the university front, and there would be trouble ahead.

But I never attempted to prophesize serious trouble ahead. I always thought then that the Shah would be wise enough to gradually let up, and move towards a more liberal regime, that he would be strong enough to do so.

Q. Well, the fact was, that during your stay there, instead of gradually opening up during those years, he was gradually, as far as politics was concerned, closing up and concentrating more and more power in his own hands.

A. Well, he was to some extent. But there were some signs. The press, I think, became a little bit more critical at times, just towards the end of my stay there. But I personally felt that the Iranian people, rather like the Greek people, were basically an undisciplined country, and they needed a firm hand. And therefore, to me it was a good

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thing the Shah was showing this hand.

And it didn't seem to me then -- one talks with hindsight now -- that SAVAK had resorted to the sort of practices which developed over the years. Don't forget that it wasn't until the very end of 1970, or the beginning of '71, that there was this guerilla attack at Siyahkal, which we talked about yesterday, and the urban guerilla movement had really not started. So this wasn't there in my day, and this didn't worry me.

Q. I'd like to get back to the Shah, and sort of recap some of the things that you have said before.

One has to do with the frequency of your meetings with the Shah. You have said that they were much less frequent than you and your successor as ambassador had expected them to be. On the average, how often would you see the Shah?

A. I should think one probably saw him, apart from at official receptions and dinners for visiting dignitaries, and so on, perhaps four times a year, something like that, four or five times a year, if that. I should think that was about it.

I told you that Mr. Aram was very anxious I should see the Shah regularly, but that was because Aram wanted some moderating influence on the Shah. But I was not prepared to get caught up with the Court in that way.

Q. And the setting would be what? It would be an audience in his palace?

A. Yes, it would be an audience at a palace, Marble Palace or up at Sedabad. There'd be nobody else present, except, of course, if there was a visiting minister. Sir Alec Douglas-Hamilton came out just after I arrived in 1963. He had a little working dinner up at the palace with him and Alec Douglas-Hamilton's staff, and so on, and the Foreign Minister.

That would happen occasionally, but in terms of a direct audience, it would be four or five times a year, I suppose. They would be quite long audiences, and one would cover a lot of ground.

I think I had one meeting with him at Farahbad. I got a message from Alim that he wished to see me, and it was on oil. Some crisis. But that was the only time. I mention that because the American Embassy believed that I used to

ride regularly with the Shah every Friday. This was quite untrue: I never went riding with the Shah -- it was with Alam. But <?>-developed. And the Americans had this belief that I was riding every week with the Shah.

One particular occasion is worth mentioning, when the Duke of Edinburgh came out to Iran, on his way to Australia, on an unofficial visit as the guest of the Shah. I've forgotten the year, 1966 or '67, I think. He said he would like to entertain the Shah at the embassy. He was staying in one of the Shah's guest houses.

I asked the protocol people, the Foreign Office, who were arranging the program, and they said, "Oh, no. The Shah will never go to a foreign embassy unless it's a state visit." So, when I next saw Alam, I told him that this had been vetoed, and he said, "Oh, he'll come to the British Embassy. I'll write to him." The Shah was in Switzerland, I think. And he wrote, and the answer was, "Yes, the Shah would be very happy to come to dinner at the British Embassy."

So, I had a dinner party for the Duke of Edinburgh and the Shah. We had six men on the Iranian side, six Iranians, and six British. It was a very successful party. The Duke of Edinburgh was in very good form, and he and the Shah got on

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very well. It was a small dinner, and we went on till past midnight. And it was a very happy evening.

Q. How were the six Iranians chosen? Was that easy?

A. Yes, I can tell you who they were. The date of the dinner was the 24th of February, 1967. On the Iranian side: the Shah; the Prime Minister, who was Roveida; the Grand Master of Ceremonies, I've forgotten who he was at that time; Prince Gholam Reza; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was Zahedi; and the Minister of Court, Alem.

On the British side there was Charles Wiggin <?>, who was the Councillor; there was Commander Martin, he was a retired naval officer who had been ADC to the Queen, and he and his wife were staying with us (Mrs. Martin had been brought up with the Queen -- they were great personal friends, and Commander Martin's father had been an admiral and the Duke of Edinburgh had served under him in the navy, so that was the link -- they were friends); and then, there was Mr. Orr <?>, who was a private secretary of <?>; and Geoffrey Dawson, who was a member of my staff. And Charles Wiggin -- there were two members of my staff.

And the placement, which was arranged by the Ministry of

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Foreign Affairs, put the Shah in the middle of the table, opposite the Duke of Edinburgh.

It was a very hilarious evening.

And the interesting thing was -- on security. I was a bit worried. I didn't tell the servants or the cook until the morning. I'd just told them we had dinner for the Duke of Edinburgh. I didn't say the Shah was coming. But I also asked the Court how many people I should have to provide meals for -- security, and so on. They said just three people. There was no great mass ...

Q. I see, the Imperial Guard didn't come and case the place
<?>

A. No. And the three people who came. Let me just get the thing out of my diary. Switch off for a minute.

I'll read from my diary:

"Eight pm. Twenty-fourth of February. Men's dinner for the Prince and the Shah. Other guests were Prince Gholam-Reza; the Prime Minister, Assadollah Alam; Ardeeshir Zahedi; Dr.

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Lughman Adham <he was the Master of Ceremonies>; Toby Martin, who arrived to stay that morning; Charles Wiggin; Geoffrey Dawaen; and James Orr.

"Went remarkably well, with Prince Philip quite sparkling in his conversation. And he and the Shah exchanging views and ourselves chipping in. All very relaxed.

"H.I.M., who arrived promptly at 8:30 pm, stayed until 11:30 pm. Jane and Bill Winter <Jane was my wife's social secretary, and Bill> gave dinner in the small dining-room to General Kemal, Colonel Fartash, also part of the Shah's entourage <they were the two people who came with the Shah, but apart from that, we had no ...>"

Q. How did he arrive? By car?

A. By car, yes.

And it was never publicized. Nobody ever knew. It never came out. I think it's the only time he ever went to a foreign embassy without it being a state visit.

Q. On these occasions where you would see him at the palace, could you describe the scene of how you would be greeted, and

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how you would be sitting or standing?

A. Well, the Shah would probably be standing up waiting for me, because I would be kept waiting a few minutes in the ante-room. And when I came in, he'd be standing.

Q. Would you be announced?

A. Yes, I think the Master of Ceremonies, whoever was looking after me, would announce me. But no great formality. You just go in, and you bow over his hand, then he'd show you to a chair, and he would be in another one -- at his desk, probably. And a servant would come in with a cup of tea.

Q. So he would be sitting behind his desk?

A. He might be sitting behind a desk. I can't really remember that. But the desk would be nearby, at any rate. And we would be rather like you and I are here, talking like this.

We would have our tea. And then if I had stuff to say... or he might begin the conversation. There'd be a few exchanges of ... sort of ... not compliments, but "How are you?" and all that sort of thing.

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I always found it very easy to talk to him. He hadn't got much sense of humor, but you could talk to him. His English was very good, and lucid, and I had no difficulty in getting him to understand what I was trying to put across. I, of course, used to have notes before I went up. I never had them out with me went I went there, but I would very carefully rehearse what I was going to say, so that I didn't forget any points. Because you might have a dozen different points to talk about.

And, in fact, I kept the very last interview I had with the Shah. You might like me to do just -- if you could switch off for a minute, I'll get it.

I kept the very last notes I had -- I always prepared notes before I went up for an audience.

A. Would you also get briefs, or instructions, from the Foreign Office?

A. It would depend on what I was talking about. Sometimes yes and sometimes no. But in this case ... More often than not, if it was a specific subject, yes, it would be talking to a Foreign Office brief.

Now, I've got here the almost illegible notes I took up on my last audience with the Shah, on the 17th of April, 1971. And the first item was about the islands (that's Tunbs and Abou Moussa) and the Union of Arab Emirates (which was still unsettled -- I mentioned this all yesterday). I emphasize, and my notes go:

"a) Speaking on instructions <in other words, I said to the Shah, 'Now, I'm talking on instructions from the Foreign Secretary.'>"

My notes read as follows:

"Secretary of State disturbed if no solution found. Islands likely to assume significance out of all proportion to their importance.

"2) H.M.G's protection will be maintained and seen to be effective until our relation with the rulers changes <in other words, what I was saying to the Shah is that we would be bound to honor our obligations, and that if he were to suddenly seize the islands we should have to retaliate>.

<I can't quite read this:>

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"Then unstable condition, e.g. United Nations <I can't remember what that refers to>

"3) Seizure of the islands by force will destroy Persians' cooperation with the Persian Gulf rulers.

"4) the firm conclusion, therefore, must be: a compromise must be reached. H.M.G. worked hard. Signs of some move by the rulers. Distress by H.I.M.'s 16th of February statement <I can't remember what that was -- something the Shah had said which had upset things>. Publicity makes harder for them to negotiate and will stir up premature hostile reaction <in other words, I was trying to say to the Shah: 'For God's sake, handle this thing carefully!'"

And then, my fourth point:

"Hope the Persians will follow any initiative likely to lead to negotiations. And hope H.I.M. will treat the rulers gently and not <underlined> insist that solution is temporary."

The next point:

"The U.A.E. <Union of Arab Emirates> single most important contribution to the Persian Gulf stability <in other words, I

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was trying to say that if we could get this organization going, which the Iranians were opposing then, this would contribute to stability in the area, and to point out that it was only the Peoples' Democratic Republic of the Yemen and the Persian government who were opposing this. So I was really saying to the Shah: 'You know, drop it <?>'

The next point is something to do with the United Nations: "Fallacy of United Nations likely to create difficulty if no Arabs were -- I can't read this -- in getting inscription <?>. <I think trying to discourage him from taking this thing to the United Nations>."

And then, the other subjects -- that was my main thing, but then I had other subjects. One -- the next one -- was copyright. I consistently tried to get the Shah to agree to sign some international copyright agreement. So I had another go at him, and quoted that even Roger Stevens' book had been pirated. And Longman's English Course was pirated. And other things.

And the Shah, in fact -- I got him so worked up on this -- I pointed out that Iran was the only civilized nation in the world who hadn't signed. He got through on the telephone, there and then, to his brother-in-law, Mr. Pahlbod, who was

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Minister of Culture, and talked to him in Persian. He didn't say I was with him, he just said, "I hear we haven't signed. We're the only civilized nation. You must do something about it." Well, I'll come back to that in a minute.

And then, the next point I made was on our consular relations. I said it was important that they should have good relations with the local authorities, because of various, you know, drug smuggling and that sort of thing.

And then I mentioned St. Anthony's, because St. Anthony's College -- I had sent out someone, Cecil Hourani <?>, to try and get some money to set up Persian studies. And I said to the Shah at the end of the audience that I had never asked him any personal favors <unclear>. And I said, "Well, I'm an old Oxford man, and I'm interested in St. Anthony's because they've got a Middle East Centre where Persian goes by default, in a way, because there's no money." And I would hope that he would be able to put up some money to help the Persian studies.

And he said, "Well, we've already helped another college. It was Wadham. I said, "Yes, the wrong college. It's got nothing to do" <That's another story, I won't bore you with. >

And then, I talked about another point I had, the myths about the British. And I've got "Bathists." I think the Shah at that time thought we were supporting the Bathists of Iraq. And I tried to explode that one.

And then I had another point: "Chieftain tanks and the status of forces." I was telling him that British teams of engineers and soldiers were arriving in September, by which time I would have left. I said there would be 25 or so, and it was important that there be some legal protection for these people when they were in Iran. I just mentioned this as coming business -- not for me to negotiate.

And I said that what we would want would be U.K. personnel -- really asking for the same treatment as the Americans got ~~<unclear>~~ their military mission.

And then I talked about the navy, saying that "nothing had been done to establish basic use, or mechanized-type facilities at Bandar Pahlavi. Must give higher priority to training skills ~~<unclear>~~." Because the British were building ships and we were worried they were not training people properly.

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That was the sort of agenda I would have for that last audience. And so, on previous occasions, I would go up there with a little bit of paper in my pocket, and go through whatever I had to talk about.

Q. Presumably, once you got back to the embassy, you wrote a report to the Foreign Office about this audience?

A. By courier, or by telegram, if it was sufficiently urgent. But normally by courier.

Q. Now, as far as you knew, on the Persian side, how was this information, this discussion, ever either put down on paper, or communicated to the responsible officials?

A. I always assumed that the Shah would -- be used to see his ministers daily, the important ones, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister -- issue instructions to them when he next saw them. But I never knew exactly how it was done.

Q. For instance, did you see him take notes as you were talking?

A. No. He never took notes, never took notes.

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Q. So

A. He had a remarkable memory.

Q. ... you had to rely on his so-called remarkable memory?

A. Yes.

Q. There was no secretary called into the room during the meeting or afterwards to take things down <unclear>?

A. The only time he had secretaries present was if I took the Foreign Minister up there, or something like that. Or Michael Stewart. And there would be a sort of a meeting. Then there would be someone taking notes. But when I had my single audiences with him, there would be nobody else present.

Q. You see the point I'm driving at. On your side, one man, you would be there. You would have a brief. You would discuss things. Then you would write a report. It would be looked at by a handful, or maybe a dozen, people back in the U.K., people of intelligence, experience. And then it would be mimeographed and xeroxed, and people would see it.

On the Iranian side, it would depend on the Shah remembering what you had said and the person before and after you had said about that, and then remembering to pass it on to the various individuals. I mean, he had to do the job of a xerox machine.

A. Oh, yes. No, it's quite true. How he did it, I don't know. And I never really bothered. Because one never had any reason to doubt that he followed up the important things one went to see him about. I mean, one always seemed to get -- I mean, I don't know what happened to those things because I left -- but when I went to see him about other things, the things had been followed up.

And, in the case of the copyright, he telephoned while I was there to Pahlbod. I went to say good-bye to Pahlbod a few days later. And I took up the question of copyright with him, which I always had. And he let on that the Shah -- I didn't tell him I was with the Shah when it happened In the end, of course, nothing happened, because, I think, there were too many vested interests in copyright in Iran.

There was also a sort of feeling: well, we've been exploited by the British and the West for so many years, let's exploit

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them for a change! Somebody told me this the other day.
This was Hoveida's attitude, really.

Q. Did you normally inform Iranian officials about your discussions with the Shah?

A. It would depend. If it was going to be useful to do so. I mean, if I talked about Bahrain, or something like that, or the islands, I would certainly have told Afshar if the negotiations were still on. Or if it was something concerning Zahedi, I would tell him. And, very often, I would go and tell Hoveida, because one knew there was this rivalry between them.

My objective was to try and keep all my contacts friendly towards me, and not let them feel I was leaning towards one. I mean, if I went and did something with Aiam, I would cover myself by going to Hoveida or Zahedi to make certain they knew what I was up to, and couldn't ever accuse me of going behind their backs.

Q. So, therefore, this coordination vacuum, if I may call it that, on the Iranian side was, to some degree, filled by yourself.

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A. To some extent, yes.

Q. Were you concerned that you may be passing on a decision made by the Shah to the Foreign Minister before the Shah is ready to pass it on to the Foreign Minister himself?

A. Well, one had to be very careful what one said. I mean, for instance, I told you yesterday about the Bahrain things. Well, he told me to deal with Afshar. And I therefore never said a word to either Alem or to Zahedi about it -- or anybody else. Kept it entirely.

And I was very careful never to repeat to the Shah what sometimes his own ministers said to me. And I know that my successor greatly upset Alem by something that Alem had said to him, which he repeated to the Shah. And the Shah was very angry with Alem. It seemed to me just common sense. If you want to keep a man's confidence, you don't repeat what he's told you unless it's very good reason to do so, and it's not going to lead to repercussions.

I was, I think, perhaps more aware than my successor, Ramsbotham, what a difficult character the Shah was, and how very carefully you had to tread. And not praise any of his own people because that would only be a kiss of death, in

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some way, for them.

Q. Initially, when you went to Iran, in '58, you refused to deal with the Shah directly. And obviously, by the time you left, or when you returned as ambassador, and certainly by the time you left, you were, in fact, dealing directly.... The answer's fairly obvious, but I'd like to have you ...

A. Quite. They were two different positions. I went out as a fairly humble charge d'affaires with a very low opinion of the Shah. I mean, the general Foreign Office view -- the Shah couldn't be trusted entirely. And my job wasn't to do any highfaluting business. It was to take soundings and find out. The sort of brief I had was not one which was to go to the Shah about things, so there was absolutely no hesitation in my mind that the way to deal with this was ...

But by the time I got back in '63, the Shah was in power. He was the foreign minister in many ways. And of all these issues -- one learned from experience -- you had to carry the Shah with you. So it was a very different situation, really.

Q. Recently a book has been published by, I think, a Polish journalist, called The Emperor. It talks about the court of Haile Selassie. I don't know if you've seen that or

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not.

A. Yea. I read it.

Q. When you went from Ethiopia to Iran, were there any similarities at all, as far as the Court and the Shah -- the two kings -- were concerned? Their moral behavior, the people around them...?

A. Well, there was a certain similarity, but of course the Ethiopian Court was much more medieval than the Iranian Court. There were similarities. I mean, the Emperor was his own foreign minister, and ministers were like officials in England or in America. If you had any serious business, you had to deal with the Emperor, and nobody but the Emperor. So there were similarities.

And I think I said yesterday, just as I tried to avoid being identified with the Court in Iran, so I tried to keep away from being regarded as the, sort of, man around the palace in Addis Ababa because it didn't do one any good at all.

I don't think there was the extent of corruption around the Court in Addis ababa, but that was because it was a much poorer country -- there wasn't the big business, there wasn't

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the oil money coming in, and so on. So, although there were people there who were making a certain amount of money, it wasn't the same sort of corruption that went on there.

The other thing was, of course one has less opportunity for social contact in Ethiopia. Very rarely you were invited to their houses. And there was no mystique about the British power there that there was in Iran. It was a different sort of position for the British, altogether, there.

Q. How would you compare the two leaders as ...?

A. Well, there was a great age difference between them. They were both shrewd operators. I think the Shah was probably more in touch with his own country than the Emperor was. But communications, you see, in Ethiopia were so very poor indeed; it was difficult for the Emperor to get around the country much.

And he hadn't got the highly-trained sort of people as there were in Iran. I mean, there were a number of highly-trained westernized people. In Ethiopia the number of western-trained technocrats and so on was very limited. It was a very different sort of set-up, in a way. But the two Courts had certain things in common.



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIRECTOR: HABIB LADJEVARDI
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDGH
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Sir Denis Wright

Date: October 11, 1984

Place: Haddenham, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape No. 8

Q. The Shah made a visit to England in 1970. I think it was an official visit....

A. In 1970, did he?

Q. Yes. Was there anything special about that? I forgot to bring that up while we were covering that period.

A. I can't remember that visit at all. He came in 1965, didn't he?

Q. Yes.

A. But 1970 -- I can't remember.

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Q. My other question had to do with whether any other British official -- and by that I mean the head of your military (I don't know if you had a head of military mission, or whether it was just the military attache in the embassy) -- your top military man, local man, your top intelligence officer, whether they had direct access to the Shah or whether they had to go through you.

A. We had no military mission there. I just had a military attache. He didn't see the Shah. But the head MIS man did have access to the Shah, just like the CIA man. In fact, he used to see the Shah more often than I did. But he would never see him without coming to see me first, and going through with me what he was going to talk about. And likewise, when he'd seen the Shah, he would come and report to me straightaway. So I kept fairly close tabs on this.

I didn't mind this. The American political councillor rather resented this sort of access. But I didn't mind it. I didn't want to see the Shah too often, and it served quite a useful purpose, really. I could get messages to him that way.

Q. I realize the sensitivity of this question, but this is

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my last one on this subject. Did he get involved in domestic politics with the Shah? Or was it mainly to do with security. . . .?

A. Mostly dealing with the Russian threat and security.

Q. He wouldn't get involved with questions of National Front, or domestic politics, or the Majlis, or <?>. . . .?

A. No. No, he wouldn't. No.

Q. That would be outside of his . . . ?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. In May, 1971 -- I suppose you had left by then -- there was a published report that Iran was threatening to shoot down British planes if they came over the islands. First of all, is this accurate? Was this some kind of a show, or was this real?

A. It could be. I'd gone by then. I can't remember that particular one. But, you see, the whole question of the islands was being negotiated. Sir William Luce had been brought out of retirement to handle this. And there was some

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question of keeping me on beyond my age of 60 to stay on till we settled this whole thing. And I heard later from the Foreign Office that it had been decided that this might drag on for a long time, and therefore better let me off the hook.

But I can't remember that particular incident. But there were some hard things said. One of my complaints against Afshar, was that a dinner of the Iran Society later that year -- let's see, it must have taken place in the summer -- I've forgotten the actual date. Well, it <?> was taken in the autumn, but it was before the islands were settled. There was a dinner at which Princess Alexandra was present.

In those days the Iran Society was a very flourishing body because we had a dinner at the Savoy every year, and it was packed out -- maximum seats 500 or 550 or so. And Afshar made a speech which -- it was meant to be a non-political society -- where he talked about the islands: that unless the British did something, the Iranians would take action You know, a very provocative speech. And if I'd been Princess Alexandra, I think I would have walked out.

So, it all ties up with that threat to shoot down airplanes.

I remember I was very embarrassed by this speech. The head

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of the Foreign Office was there. The head of BP was there. All people <to whom> I'd been trying to say, "Look, the Iranians are moving in the right direction." Here was Afshar putting down the gauntlet.

I remember the press attache at the Iranian Embassy, Shapourian, coming up to me after the dinner, and saying what did I think about Afshar's speech. I said this was the most disgusting performance I'd heard for a long time. Well he went and told Afshar. Afshar never forgave me for that, I think.

Because Eghbal -- he was at the dinner -- came down here the following Sunday for lunch. And he said to me -- I didn't raise it with him -- he said, "I didn't like Afshar's speech. I thought <?> very mal place." I said I thought it was a disgusting performance, and really was out of place, and it would do more harm than good. And Eghbal said, "I'm going to tell the Shah when I get back." And Afshar got into trouble. He always thought I was responsible. It wasn't me, it was Eghbal who did it.

So the island thing was a very acute sort of issue until it was finally ...

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Q. I guess the question I was addressing was whether during that time there were certain statements made that both sides knew were just for public consumption, rather than being said in seriousness. Was there any sort of scenario that perhaps . . .

A. No, I don't think there was. You see, I wasn't in the picture any more.

Q. As far as you were concerned?

A. No. In the end, of course, we agreed with the Iranians that they would get the islands, but there was no sort of synchronized -- "We'll make a tough statement, you make ..." I don't think there was any of that at all.

Q. A different subject now. When we were talking about your visit to Nassau, you asked me to ask you about Amir Sadeghi and his visit.

A. Oh, yes.

Well, I mentioned Amir Sadeghi because Are you seeing him?

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Q. No, I'm not. I've never met him.

A. Because I'd never met Amir Sadeghi until sometime in 19-- -- whenever it was, before the revolution. He wrote to me from Tehran and said we had good friends in common. He mentioned, I think, Shaul Bakhaan and Fereidoun

Q. Who is he? His father was?

A. He was a chauffeur for the Shah.

Q. But he himself had been educated?

A. He was educated over here at, I think, the School of Economics. At any rate, he wrote to me and said that he was going to produce a book on twentieth-century Iran, or something, and he wished me to contribute to it and also be editor. I wrote back and said I was very sorry I was too busy. I was writing my own book. And I wouldn't have the time to do anything about it.

Well, he wouldn't take no for an answer, and he came over to London. I gave him a drink at the Travellers' Club. And he charmed me, with his personality and so on. And in the end, I said, "Well, what I will do -- I will write the

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introduction. I won't be editor, but I'll write it, subject to seeing all the articles." That was the same thing I'd made about that book on agriculture -- land reform.

And I also helped him -- gave him names. Because he had a list of people he was going to get to contribute, he'd got from Alistair Buchan, who's now dead but was at Oxford, a professor of international relations. He had a very good list of names. And I gave him some other names -- one or two people in America, and so on. I also suggested that Ronald <?> of BP might be a person who could do the editing.

Well, the long and short of it was that that book came out. I did do an introduction to it -- a short introduction, he wanted a much longer one. And it was, as far as I could make out, financed by the Shah. But he had been given this opportunity to get more controversial articles. But it was an attempt to do this sort of thing. I mean, say to the Shah, "For God's sake, don't have these propaganda books!"

The next thing he did was he wanted to write a book about the Shah, and he wanted the Duke of Edinburgh to do the introduction. He asked me whether I could help. I said, "Not on your life! You write to the Palace, or get the Shah or somebody to write." And he got turned down.

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So he then wrote to Lord Carrington, who was then, not Foreign Secretary, but was president of the Iran Society. And Carrington, who is a friend of mine and lives quite close here, he sent me this correspondence, and said, "What shall I reply?" I said, "Don't touch this with a barge-pole, because in your position you don't want to get involved in a book which will just be a panegyric of the Shah and all the Royal Family, and so on. So Peter Carrington didn't do it, and in the end Amir Sadeghi did the introduction himself. Well, so much for the introduction.

I was increasingly sceptical about this chap. But then, at the time of the revolution he suddenly appeared on TV as being the sort of press-man of the palace, and so on, and seemed to have quite a position.

And, one day, after the revolution. And the Shah had left. The Shah was in Morocco. He telephoned me. I thought he'd been left behind, and been killed in Tehran. But he telephoned, and said, "I've just come from Morocco. What do you think about the Shah coming here?" This was before any approach. And I straight off said, "I don't think this is a good idea, because you know what the Iranian suspicions are about the British. If we have the Shah here, there'll be no

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end of trouble. They'll think we're intriguing with him. I would be dead against him coming to England."

And that was that. Well then ... I've forgotten now, but after that Amir Sadeghi came over to London and I don't know whether he got in touch with me again or what, but I was sufficiently intrigued by his position to try and find out what it was. So that's why I asked Kambiz Attabai what he thought about it. And he said that he was a friend of the Shahbanou's and had been on Nassau.

And I asked the Shah -- I didn't put it in my diary, but I did ask the Shah. I said, "What about this man Amir Sadeghi?" He said, "He's a friend of the Empress, not of mine." Something like that. It was quite clear.

Well, since Amir Sadeghi is in London, he lives in considerable style, in Eaton Square or somewhere like that. About a year and a half ago he asked me to lunch, and I was very surprised by the people he had there. He had the head of King's College, London, there, a retired Air Marshall. He had the foreign editor of the Economist there. He had that man Anthony Sampson, who writes books about the arms question -- he wrote about the oil question.

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He seems to have a great deal of money. But I would say he's just a bit too smooth and slippery.

But I thought he might be a person you ought to interview.

Q. Yes. I'll put him down.

Well, this is the last part of the interview, and I have a list of names. I'm wondering if there are any of these names that recall any particular incident which you think would be important historically.

Seyyed Hasan Taghizadeh -- did you ever meet him while he was ...?

A. Taghizadeh. Yes, I did, but he was so old and senile that I went to call on him, and talked to him at odd parties at the Senate, but never got anything out of him at all ... (?)

Q. Ali Soheili?

A. Yes, I did. Yes. He helped me, I think I told you, at this confrontation with the Shah in 1954 at Queen Soreya's -- the celebration of the marriage. It was Soheili who got hold

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of me and said, "I'm going to make the Shah talk." And he took a very tough line with the Shah, and made him talk. So I was always very grateful to Soheili. And then I used to see him in London occasionally, when he was ambassador, when I came on leave. And he was always very friendly.

He had a very curious wife, who was a White Russian, I think, or Georgian, dancer, wasn't she? She obviously had been a very beautiful woman. But I remember, she came one day rushing round to the Embassy with the passport of an Iranian cook. And she said, "I want visa quickly for him, to England." This was because she'd suddenly got him to leave the German Embassy, and she wanted to get him out of the country before the Germans could pay him a higher price.

So then she came back to Tehran, when he was ambassador in London, and gave a party for my wife and myself -- a sort of dancing party -- and she said she wanted to have a long talk with me alone. I wondered what the hell it was. And we had dinner. I arranged to give her dinner or lunch at the Residence, which was then the smart place.

And she turned up -- this was in 1954, I suppose -- late, but she turned up. And of course everybody knew everybody in Tehran in those days, and they were all <wondering> what was

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I doing with this woman in this place. And after a bit, she said in her broken English, "I want you make me agent." And I thought, "What's this? Mata Hari, or something?" I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "I want good agent for English motor-car company, for English pharmaceutical company..."

She had a bit of paper. And she had Boots down -- Boots, the pharmaceutical people. I've forgotten who the other two were, but there were three. And I said, "What do you know about business?" She said, "Ah, but I have good partner." I don't know whether this man was her lover, or what it was, but she was around next day for my answer. Of course I said we hadn't got any such thing in our gift. But that was when she was wife of the Persian ambassador in London.

Q. Morteza-Gholi Bayati

A. Was he the head of the N.I.C.C.? No. He took part in the negotiations in 1954, but he was very much a figurehead, I think. I mean, the people who mattered were Rohani and Naficy and, I suppose -- I don't know whether Falah took part in it, but ... They were the people. Bayat didn't carry any weight.

Q. Did you ever have any contact or association with

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Princess Ashraf? Personally?

A. Well, the first time I was in Iran, I had nothing to do with her at all. And when I left Tehran in October, 1955, and handed over to the charge d'affaires, because Stevens hadn't come back from London, to a man called Kitchener (?), (?) Kitchener, who was the commercial councillor. A man I personally disliked and distrusted. Much to my disgust, he was to be charge d'affaires, attending (?) Roger Stevens.

I remember saying to him, "(?), keep the Royal Family at arms' length, etc." Well, within a matter of days of my leaving, he was entertaining Ashraf in the Embassy. And she was tied up with some big contract for roads or something. So my answer is I had nothing to do with her. I kept her at arms' length. But this man Kitchener got involved with her.

When I went back as ambassador, there was a -- Allian and Hanbury (?) were setting up a pharmaceutical plant for the Iranian government, and it was to be opened by the Shah. Just after I arrived back in Tehran. And Princess Ashraf gave a party for this -- she was involved in some way. I got commanded to go to this party, which I did.

And she also had a party for Lollobrigida <Lollebrigida?>

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when she was out, and she asked the American ambassador and myself, with our wives. We sat on floor, and that sort of thing. It was a rather distasteful sort of party -- there was no bad behavior. But those were the only two times.

I never invited her to the embassy at all. But there was just one other incident Oh yes. I think I had to go and call on her officially, just after I arrived, before going to this Allen and Hanbury thing. There was a woman who was a friend of hers, who used to turn up skiing. She looked very Mongolian. I've forgotten her name now, but she was a part of that royal, rather corrupt, entourage. And Princess Ashram said to me, "I have a friend of yours here, waiting to see you." And this girl came in, and I didn't know her from (?). I mean, I'd had no relations of any sort with her.

What the game was, I don't know, but I remember Horace Philips, who gave a party for me, saying the same girl had demanded that she be invited to his party for me. Whether she was hoping I should become her lover, or what it was, I don't know, but Ashraf had produced her. I said I was very sorry, but I just don't know this woman. And it was quite true. That was the sole extent of my dealings with Ashraf.

Q. Did you ever meet or know anything about Ayatollah

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Abolghasem Kashani?

A. Kashani? No.

Q. <unclear> President of the Majlis, ...

A. No.

Q. In any of your studies, did you ever come across his having been a specially good friend of Britain? This is another one of those myths that, you know, he's anti-British on the one hand, and in the pay of the British on the other.

A. Never. No.

Q. How about Dr. Mozzafar Bagha'i, who was a colleague of Mossadegh's, and then fell out with Mossadegh. While you were there he was sort of in semi-retirement.

A. I don't think I ever came across him. I'm certain I didn't. No.

Q. Khalil Maleki, who was head of the, sort of the socialists...

A. No. Never.

Q. How about Sardar Fakher Hekmat?

A. Yes. He was a good friend of the British. He didn't talk a word of English. Why he was friendly to us I never discovered. I used to be much embarrassed by Sardar Fakher because he was a great friend of Sajadi, the man I mentioned as being in the embassy, the oriental, and he used to give a lunch or dinner for my wife and myself, both I think when I was there as charge d'affaires and again when I was ambassador. They were very dreary affairs, because he would have his son there, Dr. Hekmat, who now lives in Paris. And there was no English spoken; my Persian was not that fluent. He had no real conversation at all.

He also embarrassed me more than once by giving me a rug, a quite expensive rug, and that sort of thing.

When I went out and got involved in trying to stop the Shah signing up with the Russians, in 1959, I went to have tea with Sardar Fakher then, with Sajadi. And he was, I remember, very worried about the Shah's dealings with the Russians. He wasn't involved, but he spoke to me -- I could refresh my memory from my diary, but I did ... He raised the

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subject with me.

And on that occasion -- this was the sort of thing he used to do -- he gave me this box, you see. Inside it, there's a very nice edition of Sa'adi, you see, with a little inscription. I think that's by him. You can read it.

Q.

A. You see, he was ... He never asked for any quid pro quo -- he never asked any favors. After I retired, he used to come over to London. He would telephone, and I would arrange to see him.

On one occasion -- I've forgotten which year it was now, 1973 or '74 -- he telephoned, and I arranged for him to meet me at the Travellers' Club for lunch. I sent him a letter, because we did all this in Persian on the telephone, and my Persian wasn't that good, so I wrote to him, and confirmed this. Well, he misunderstood it -- he couldn't understand my English letter, you see -- and I waited at the Travellers'.

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He didn't come, and so -- I was spending the night in London, I think, I've forgotten why, but there was some reason.

Well, my wife was here alone, and she had listened on the radio that day, the evening news, and it said a dangerous criminal had escaped from Aylesford (?) Prison, and householders were warned to be careful. Well about nine o'clock at night there was a knock on the door. She was a bit worried, but she thought she'd better go to the door. And this was Sarder Fakher, who had taken a taxi all the way down from London because he had then re-read my letter, or got someone, and realized he had made a mistake.

He was so ashamed of himself, he decided he must come down and apologize. And so he got a taxi all the way from London. This was a man eighty years old. I was always very touched by this. Then back he went to London.

He came over and went to hospital. I remember trying to find him in hospital. I couldn't. I wanted to see him. The hospital either misdirected me ... I never found him there.

But at any rate, I was on friendly terms with him, but could never understand quite why this devotion to the British, why he gave me expensive presents: a couple of rugs. When I

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left Tehran on retirement he sent me a most lovely rug. And that sort of thing. So I did see him. And I think we regarded him in the embassy as probably not too happy with the Shah, but one of the more liberal of the old regime.

Q. If I remember correctly, he was sort of booted out of office at the same time as Hossein Ali, ... that little meeting they had after the Fifteenth of Khordad riots.

A. Was he then? I don't know when it was. I thought it was some other time. I never associated him with that. It could be

Q. How about Queen Soraya? Did you ever meet her?

A. Soraya? Really only once, at that wedding party. She was off to Europe, you know, most of that summer of 1954 or '55, when I left. And I never had any talks with her at all. She never struck me as more than a good-looking girl, but I don't think she'd got much interest in people.

Q. You started to say something about the last time you saw Hossein Ali, when he was ill and was dying, and you said died also of a broken heart. Did you speak with each other at that time? Was he well enough?

A. Oh, yes. I don't think he made any complaints, but he -- we spoke to each other.

Aia had -- he was a very loyal friend, really. Although I think in that period, '53-'55, we in the embassy regarded him with a certain amount of suspicion as being rather weak, and so on, he remained a very good friend. When I -- the first piece of Persian pottery I ever received was a gift from Aia my first Christmas, or my second Christmas. When I was in Addis Ababa, he sent me a collection of coins, both gold and silver -- Sasanian and Islamic coins, which now I've given to the Ashmolean Museum. He never knew I was going to come back as ambassador.

When he knew I was going as ambassador, later, after these little Christmas presents used to come, he wrote to me a very charming letter, and sent a pair of turquoise cuff-links, which I normally wear -- I haven't got them on today, but I normally have them on -- turquoise. And said, "My Dear Denis, this is to remind you of the azure sky which awaits your arrival in Persia."

Well, when I went out there, I went to call on him before presenting credentials to the minister of court. And he told

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me he was worried about some of the Shah's activities -- the land-reform, and asked me to speak to the Shah. Well, I said it was not for me -- this was not the British ambassador's thing. But Ala was worried ...

Q. What aspect of the land-reform?

A. Well, he didn't really go into details.... I can't remember, at any rate. But he was looking to me to say something to the Shah to try and restrain him. When he finally was dismissed, I wrote him a letter saying that -- I've got his, I can dig them out for you, if you like, a copy of some of his letters that he wrote to me. Charming letters, he used to write, in beautiful English.

Q. But nothing of political significance?

A. No. No.

Q. How about General Teimour Bakhtiar? Did you ... We talked about that yesterday. While in Iran, while he was head of ...

A. No, I can't recall any special meetings with him, or so

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one. I wouldn't normally go and see him, you see. He was a military governor. It wasn't my business at all. I don't remember entertaining him at all in the embassy. Well, I wasn't in the embassy -- as a councillor.

Of course, in those days, a councillor was a person that people like Eghbal, or anybody wanting to become Prime Minister, would be only too happy to have dinner even with a junior secretary in the British Embassy. It's a very curious situation. It had changed by the 1960s, when the Iranians were much more stand-offish. But in the 1950s, any Iranian invited to the British Embassy came like a shot, because he thought this would lead to higher things.

Q. How about General Hasan Pakravan? Did you ...

A. I knew him, because he was a close friend of General Arfa' and Mrs. Arfa', and one used to meet him up there on a Friday quite often. I used to go up there for Friday lunches sometimes. What I saw of Pakravan I liked very much, but again I didn't have any official dealings with him at all.

Q. How about his replacement, General Nasiri?

A. Yes, I thought he was a bit of an ass, really. I never

thought much of Nasiri. He once, about a year or two before I left Tehran on retirement, he asked us to dinner, my wife and myself. There were various members of SAVAK there, and there was a MI (?) sort of intelligence man. Asadollah Alam was there. After dinner -- he'd got this young German wife, hadn't he, at the time, I think -- he put on a film.

I can't abide staying up late; I like to go to bed by eleven o'clock. And in Tehran I used to make it a rule that at a diplomatic party, I mean if the dean of the diplomatic corps -- and I wasn't dean, a Brazilian was -- didn't leave by eleven o'clock, I used to go up and say, "Look, I'm very sorry, but I've got to go to bed."

But this dinner of Nasiri went on and on, and then we had the first part of the film. About one o'clock in the morning, when that was over, I decided I'd had enough. So I left. I think he was a bit upset, because there was still another part.

I finally (?), insofar as one had any dealings with him, and I'd say that was the sort -- really a rather stupid man. I didn't have much use for him.

Q. That didn't really make sense, to put someone as head of

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one's intelligence unit a man who ...

A. Well, that was only my judgment. It wasn't for me to tell the Shah he wasn't any good, but he may have been all right. He was very loyal to the Shah. He'd been the man who'd -- hadn't he flown him out or gone with him to Baghdad?

Q. He had served ... Mossadegh.

A. Well, you see, as I told you yesterday, at that farewell dinner that the Shah gave for me, in September, 1955, he was present at that dinner, so... And when I went up -- I flew up to the Caspian to see the Shah, just before I left Tehran in September or October, 1955. Again about the Baghdad Pact and all that. I flew up in a little tiny airplane, and landed on the shore at Nowshahr. Nasiri was there with a great Cadillac to meet me and take me to the Shah. He was always very close to the Shah.

Q. what about Mr. Jafar Sharif-Emami. Did you have much to ...?

A. Not much to do with him. I used to see him occasionally because he was running the Pahlavi Foundation, and I mentioned yesterday, there was this question of a debt owed

to Cemantation, which I had to go and see him about. And I may have seen him on other occasions, but I don't recollect anything particularly.

Q. One would expect that the British Ambassador would see a lot of the President of the Senate.

A. Well, why should he? One saw him at parties, but there was no No, my business was with the minister of foreign affairs, you see, or the prime minister, not with the president of the senate.

Q. Well, Dr. Amini, when you arrived the second time, had already been prime minister and was sort of out of favor,

A. Yea. So I kept him at arms' length. I had him around to the dinner for Lauden (?) I mentioned yesterday. And we used to invite him to the Queen's Birthday Party, I think, but otherwise I didn't make contact with him.

Q. Did you meet with anyone, any of the so-called opposition figures, such as Mehdi Bazargan or Ayatollah Taleghani?

A. Not consciously, at any rate. I used to see, I think, Shahpour Bakhtiar at parties. I recognized his photo

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subsequently, but I didn't know who he was. And I am not conscious of meeting what I call the real opposition at any time.

Q. How about the former queen, Shahbanou Farah? Did you have much contact with her?

A. Not much, but we my wife did a painting once of Farahbad, where she used to I remember when we went. (I don't know if it was when I finally left or when we were going on leave.) I think when we were going on leave we went to say good-bye to her. Then we had quite a talk. And she was saying then how she envied us being able to travel freely around the country and not be really recognized. She said, "When I go, I have to be escorted everywhere, and I can't" That was the sort of

One regarded her as sort of a nice, modest, humble person, who, from what one heard, was a restraining influence on the Shah in the early days. But I think that all vanished later.

Q. My last question is with regard to Mr. Hoveida. You talked about him a little bit, but is there anything that has to do with him and his person or his tenure as prime minister which you think is useful to mention?

A. No. I said yesterday that I thought that as time passed he became too, I'd say, corrupted by power, not by money, I don't think he was venal. At one time I thought he was a good, efficient prime minister. He never, as far as I know, stood up to the Shah. He just carried out the Shah's orders, and that suited the Shah very well. He was probably a very good administrator.

He was very good company too. I enjoyed him as somebody to talk to, and so on. He was well-read, he'd got good conversation, and so on. But I never got on to really intimate terms with him. I knew that between him and Aiam there was no great love lost, and so he knew I was close to Aiam, so that probably acted ... But I don't think he was particularly fond of the British.

But if you go and see my friend Bernard Alexander, who lives nearby. He was very close to Hoveida, and has a very high opinion of him, because he was with him in the United Nations Refugee organization, and I think you'll find him rather interesting on Hoveida.

Q. Is there any prominent Iranian which I haven't mentioned who should have been mentioned?

A. I can't think of anybody. I can't think of anybody who ... Bagher Pirnia we just touched on. He was governor of Shiraz, and he fell out with Hoveida, I think. Then he became governor of Khorasan. I went up and spent two days with him, saying good-bye to him, and so on. I always found him a very friendly, decent person to deal with. I saw him the other day -- he came through. He's got out of Iran and he's gone to America. I saw him in London. In fact, he was in hospital, and quite seriously ill for a time.

Hasan Alavi was always ambitious to ... was very friendly with the British for a time because he'd been trained by, not Philip ... Elizabeth Monroe's husband, who was an eye-specialist. He would never charge any Britisher for any consultation, because he said he owed so much to the British.

But I think he was disappointed in the British because he had political ambitions, and he never became prime minister. And so he switched to the Americans, and became president of the Iran-American Society. I think the reason for that was that he had these political ambitions. I'm told he's coming to England any minute now. Did you know that?

Q. No, I didn't.

A. But he was what I call one of the old-school ones used to see from time to time. Like, I mentioned <unclear> and Musavi, Abdullah Musavi, I think it was. In a way, they used to waste one's time. They used to come round and talk to one and grumble about things and want to know what the British thought about this and the other. But I always believed in seeing them, because they were sort of faithfuls, they were the relics of the old Anglophiles. They weren't asking favors. I think they just liked to feel they had some sort of link with the British Embassy.

And I think -- this is stuff which is not going to be released, is it -- I think one of the faults of Tony Parsons was that he wouldn't have anything to do with these people. He regarded them all as fossils. And I think that if he had paid more attention to some of these people, he would have had more sort of warnings that things were not well. Because they were the people who, in my day, grumbled about the Shah.

And I used to champion the Shah, and say, well, the Shah is doing this, that, and the other, and used to rather stick up for the Shah. But I think they might have given him some sort of indication that things were far from well.

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No. I can't think of anybody else.

The most ambitious and intriguing of all those people was Pirasteh, I think, who was an unscrupulous man, and I think was responsible for getting Naficy, Ahmed, put into prison, as I mentioned.

Q. He was also reputed to have been close to Princess Ashraf.

A. Was he? Yes, that could well be.

Of course, Rahnama was a character who was pretty close to Princess Ashraf.

Q. Majid?

A. Majid, yes. He got the money out of her for Wadham College, you see. This was done through that curious fellow, Ishag (?), Prem Ishag (?), at Wadham. But Rahnama, as I saw him in the embassy was in many ways a sort of a light-weight chap I think the Iranians called him Mr. Afro-Asian, wasn't he? He was a friend of Hoveida's, wasn't he?

Q. Yes.

A. What other ministers were there?

Q. Amouzegar.

A. Amouzegar, yes. I had a high regard for Amouzegar. I used to come across him when I was undersecretary in the foreign office at the Baghdad Pact meetings, and so on. He was very able and good.

As minister of finance under Hoveida, I had some problems over the British Council being taxed. I've forgotten what the things were, but there was quite a big issue about taxation of the British Council. I went to Amouzegar direct on this, and argued the case. And succeeded in getting whatever it was. I don't know whether it was complete exemption from taxation or At any rate, he was very accomodating on that.

So I never regarded him, in my day at any rate, as an American stooge. People have always said he was in American pay, and so on but I regarded him as a fairly forthright ...

Q. Was there no way that your intelligence people could tell you as a fact whether these rumors were true or not?

A. No, no.

Q. They couldn't?

A. But I don't think they were current in my day. I mean, it was after the balloon went up. It never occurred to me that he was an American agent or anything like that.

Q. How about Alikhani? Did you have any dealings with him?

A. Yes, and what I had, I think, were quite satisfactory. Except that I think when he was at the university his niece wanted a visa for England, and he sent her round and said she'd been refused a visa. When I went into it, of course, she'd been caught shoplifting in London, like many other Iranians. And I told Alikhani, I said, "I'm sorry, I'm not going to give her a visa, because if she goes to England and does that, that's *<unclear>*."

But apart from that, my dealings with Alikhani were satisfactory. I don't think I had very much to do with him when he was minister of economy *<unclear>*. At the university, I had little to do with him.

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Mosseini Nasr one saw occasionally. Cyrus Ghani. But, I mean, they were all fringe people.

Q. How about the two newspaper editors, Mas'oudi and Meshahzadeh? Did you ...

A. Well, Mas'oudi I got quite close to over Bahrain. It was his initiative from his side, it wasn't mine. And I was always very grateful to him for that. Meshahzadeh I never had very much to do with. I don't know -- one was slightly suspicious of him in some way. But we never had much to do with him. He is tied up with the Thompson organization, I think. I did go and spend a day, or have lunch there, just before I retired, I think, to go round the whole organization.

We had a press attache -- Information Officer, we called him, I think -- whose job was to keep in touch with these people. But I never attempted to get them to write articles this way or the other. Except I did complain to Mas'oudi when there was a rather nasty article about the British over the Persian Gulf. I've forgotten. It was at a time when it was not very helpful, and I did go and see Mas'oudi and say that I thought this was pretty unfair, and so on. And he made amends. He wrote an editorial.

Likewise, I had trouble with the Ettefa'at when ... the Queen's Birthday Party. I didn't like photographers coming. I didn't want too much publicity for the British, and I didn't want photographers at the Queen's ... You see, most of the national days, everybody ... the ambassadors liked to have pictures appearing in the papers, and so on. And so, they gate-crashed this party, and I had them turned out, these people.

There was a nasty article in the Tehran Journal about this and me. And I complained to Mas'oudi. I said, you know, "This is monstrous." And he sent his son round to apologize to me for this article. You could do things

I never made what I call an unreasonable demand on the papers, and I never tried to get them to put in, you might say, pro-British articles. My information officer, yes, we had our service. We sent out articles about this, that and the other, and they published them. That was his job. But personally I kept, you might say, aloof from the press.

And I wouldn't normally go for interviews with them, except at the very end, when I let them come and interview me, and so on.

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That's it. I don't think there's probably an awful lot more one can say.

Q. Thank you for giving me two days of your time.

A. Well, thank you. I hope it's of some use.

Q. I hope I'm still around at the time when these come out.

A. Well, you will be, yes.